



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
2005 NE Green Oaks Blvd., Suite 140
Arlington, Texas 76006

Dear Interested Party,

On December 17, 2020, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service published a 12-month finding in the Federal Register in response to a petition to list the monarch. After a thorough assessment of the monarch butterfly's status, the Service has found that adding the monarch butterfly to the list of threatened and endangered species is warranted but precluded by work on higher-priority listing actions. With this decision, the monarch becomes a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act, and its status will be reviewed each year until it is no longer a candidate.

Over the past 20 years, scientists have noted declines in North American monarchs overwintering in Mexico and California, where these butterflies cluster. It is estimated that the eastern population fell from about 384 million in 1996 to a low of 14 million in 2013. The population in 2019 was about 60 million. The western population, located in California, saw a more precipitous decline, from about 1.2 million in 1997 to fewer than 30,000 in 2019. Preliminary results from surveys in late 2020 indicate a further decline in western monarch numbers.

In 2014, the Service received a petition to list the species and published a substantial 90-day finding in December 2014. In 2016, the agency began an in-depth status assessment, looking at the global population as well as focusing on monarchs in North America, where 90% of the world's population occurs.

The Endangered Species Act provides for a warranted-but-precluded finding when the Service does not have enough resources to complete the listing process because the agency must first focus on higher-priority listing rules. Obligations to meet court orders and settlements due to litigation can affect when the agency works on some species. The Service prioritizes work on imperiled species through its National Listing Workplan. Currently, listing actions for 161 species on the national workplan (64%) are a higher priority than the monarch. These species include plants, insects, freshwater mussels, fish, birds and mammals. Based on our listing priorities and workload, the Service intends to propose listing the monarch in 2024, if listing is still warranted at that time.

Robust conservation efforts are ongoing across the continent, including partnerships with states, tribes, Canada and Mexico, local communities and conservation organizations, to address threats to the monarch and to bolster milkweed abundance and other habitat needs.

More information about the 12-month finding and how to help conserve monarch butterflies is available here: <https://www.fws.gov/savethemonarch>.

Please contact me if you have further questions debra_bills@fws.gov or arles@fws.gov.

Sincerely,

Debra Bills
Project Leader