

NEW STEPS TO PROTECT POLLINATORS, CRITICAL CONTRIBUTORS TO OUR NATION'S ECONOMY

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Today, [President Obama issued a memorandum](#) directing U.S. government agencies to take additional steps to protect and restore domestic populations of pollinators, including honey bees, native bees, birds, bats, and butterflies – critical contributors to our nation's economy, food system, and environmental health.

Pollinators contribute substantially to the sustainability of our food production systems, the economic vitality of the agricultural sector, and the health of the environment. Honey bee pollination alone adds more than \$15 billion in value to agricultural crops in the United States each year, and pollination by other species adds another \$9 billion. In addition, pollinators help wild flowering plants grow, making ecosystems stronger and more resilient.

But for decades, pollinator populations in the United States have been falling. The number of managed U.S. honey bee colonies dropped from 6 million colonies in 1947, to 4 million in 1970, 3 million in 1990, and just 2.5 million today. And last winter, the Monarch butterfly migration across North America was smaller than all previous migrations on record, and there is a risk that this iconic migration could end. These numbers highlight the importance of taking immediate steps to address these alarming declines and ensure the sustainability of our nation's food production systems, economy, and environment.

The President's memorandum directs federal agencies to do just that, calling for the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA) and the Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to co-chair a new Pollinator Health Task Force, which will be responsible for focusing federal efforts to research, prevent, and recover from pollinator losses. These efforts include a public education campaign to teach people about ways they can help pollinators in their own communities. The memorandum also requires federal agencies to lead by example, taking specific measures to substantially expand pollinator habitat on federal lands, and to build on federal efforts with public-private partnerships.

In addition to the Presidential Memorandum released today, federal agencies and states are stepping up to the challenge of combatting pollinator declines. This week:

The Department of Interior and USDA have joined 45 state governors in issuing Pollinator Week Proclamations, publicly acknowledging the vital services that pollinators provide.

The EPA released guidance designed to help scientists accurately assess the potential risks that different pesticides may pose to bees.

As part of its Conservation Reserve Program, the USDA has announced an \$8 million initiative to provide funding to farmers and ranchers who will establish new pollinator habitats on agricultural lands.

Healthy pollinator populations are essential to the U.S. economy and environment, and these are just some of the steps being taken to protect a vital national asset. We look forward to continuing our work

across the government and with partners in states, communities, and the public and private sectors to better understand and address this important economic challenge.

[Read a fact sheet about the economic challenge posed by declining pollinator populations.](#)

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