



Pollinator and Monarch Habitat Grant Program

An opportunity for FFA Chapters and other student groups to propagate, plant, and monitor milkweed and other native wildflowers on rural lands

Grant amount:	\$800
Deadline to apply:	November 30, 2017
Awards announced:	December 15, 2017
Period of work:	January – December, 2018

OVERVIEW:

Sand County Foundation seeks high school teachers—especially those who support chapters of FFA—to involve students in hands-on habitat restoration on farms and other rural lands. For 2018 we are offering financial grants for groups of students to raise native prairie plants in greenhouses in late winter, transplant them on appropriate sites in the spring, and maintain and monitor the plants through the summer and fall. Schools without access to a greenhouse may choose to acquire appropriate plants from a nursery.

These grants are not for ornamental plants or for creating small pollinator gardens on school grounds. The objective is to increase the diversity of milkweed and other native forbs (wildflowers) on larger open spaces (at least one or two acres) for the benefit of monarch butterflies, native bees, and honeybees. A key component of this project is finding a suitable site for the plants. This may include CRP land, farm boundaries, rural electric cooperative facilities, or other open lands. We welcome you to find a cooperating landowner through your own social network. If desired, Sand County Foundation can help identify a property with our conservation partners.

Based in Madison, Wisconsin, Sand County Foundation is a non-profit conservation organization dedicated to working with private landowners across North America to advance ethical and scientifically sound land management practices that benefit the environment.

PURPOSE:

Insect pollinators are essential for food production and ecological diversity, but their populations are at risk. Beekeepers are losing honey bee colonies, wild bee species are in decline, and the number of monarch butterflies making their fascinating annual migration has dropped by 80% in recent years.

A leading cause for the decline of bees and monarchs is habitat loss, especially within the Corn Belt. All nectar-feeding insects require a diversity of forbs to survive, and monarchs also require milkweed in order to reproduce. Pollinator gardens in urban areas provide valuable habitat, but are not sufficient by themselves to recover pollinator populations. Habitat enhancement on rural working lands—especially farms and utility rights-of-way—is crucial to help these species rebound.

GRANT ACTIVITIES:

This is a competitive grant. Up to ten awards will be made to Wisconsin schools (public or private) with the most promising proposals. Activities span the 2018 calendar year, as follows:

1. Seek a willing landowner with a suitable site for habitat enhancement (January - April)
2. Join an instructional webinar for grant recipients (January)
3. Obtain necessary materials for seed propagation. Sand County Foundation will provide seeds and seed trays (January) *
4. [“Cold stratify”](#) seeds in a refrigerator for two to six weeks (January/February) *
5. Germinate seed in flats in the greenhouse, for about three weeks (February/March) *
6. Optional: attend a scheduled tour of a commercial native plant nursery (March)
7. Transfer seedlings from flats to individual cells and grow these “plugs” for approximately two months (April and May) *
8. With the landowner, mark transects or points for future transplanting and complete mowing, spraying, or other site preparation as necessary (April/May)
9. Transplant plugs in groups of 5-10 plants along the marked transects and/or points (May/June)
10. Monitor plugs twice per month and water as needed (Summer)
11. Document survival rate at end of season (September/October)
12. Prepare final report and story, written or multi-media (November/December)

* Schools without greenhouse access may acquire plants as “plugs” from a nursery or a separate program, in lieu of steps 3-7. See application document for more information.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

Sand County Foundation will provide to each grant recipient:

- A flat-rate payment of \$800
- Assistance, if needed, to locate an appropriate site in partnership with other conservation organizations (we cannot guarantee success in finding a suitable site)
- A guidance document, a webinar training, and one hour of individual expert consulting (by phone/email) from a contracted expert
- Native wildflower seeds appropriate for the project site (milkweed and at least three other forb species)
- Trays for growing approximately 960 plugs (thirty 32-plug trays)

Grant recipients agree to provide:

- Ongoing project supervision by the lead teacher
- Four or more students committed to completing all activities and reporting outcomes. Expect the student team to cumulatively spend up to 30 hours per month, with highest time demand during March/April in greenhouse, and May/June in the field
- Adequate greenhouse space and resources: at least 75 square feet of greenhouse space at 60°- 85° daytime / 40°+ nighttime temperatures from March through May. Or, schools without a greenhouse may purchase plugs of appropriate plant species.
- Written permission from the landowner to host installation of the plants, and provide for site preparation (such as mowing or herbicide spraying).
- Approximately 12-14 site visits spanning April to October, including the summer
- Necessary watering of transplants if rainfall is not sufficient
- Permission to share photos, video, and data collected from the project

HOW TO APPLY:

Please complete the attached Word document and return via email by November 30th to: Craig Ficene, Program Director, Sand County Foundation, cficene@sandcountyfoundation.org

Questions? First, please read the attached Q&A sheet. For additional detail, feel free to reach Craig at the email above, or at 608-663-4605 x22.

This opportunity is made possible by grants to Sand County Foundation from the Monarch Joint Venture and the We Energies Foundation

Monarch and Pollinator Habitat Enhancement Grant:

Frequently asked Questions:

My teaching is not focused on agriculture. Can I still apply?

Yes. While we are directing this program primarily to agriculture educators involved in FFA, we warmly welcome teachers of any discipline to participate.

Can middle schools apply?

Yes. Keep in mind we have designed this program with high school students in mind, so we expect that greater teacher involvement would be necessary for middle school students to meet project expectations. But we welcome applications from middle school teachers willing to make that commitment.

Can I use this grant to plant habitat on our school grounds?

No, at least not on landscaped areas. But if your school owns agricultural or other non-landscaped open lands, it may qualify.

Our school does not have a greenhouse. Can we still participate?

Yes, in lieu of growing out plants in a greenhouse you can obtain native plant “plugs” from a commercial nursery or a separate conservation program. These can be expensive, though some discounted or free options exist (see application form for more details).

What kind of plants can we use?

Grants are exclusively for planting native perennial wildflowers (forbs) optimal for pollinators and monarch butterflies. This includes milkweed but also other native nectar-producing wildflowers that are underrepresented on the landscape. No annual or non-native plants can be used with this program. Sand County Foundation and our conservation partners will advise grantees on the specific plant species appropriate for each site.

About how much time will students need to dedicate to this project?

It varies, but we anticipate up to 30 total person-hours per month, with greatest time commitment for transferring seedlings from trays to individual cells (likely in March) and transplanting in the field (likely in May). Also expect significant time for watering the plants in the field if there's not enough rain in late spring and summer. The work will require several students working as a team.

My school is in the city. What if there are no farms nearby?

Our goal is to scale up from garden-scale plantings. We welcome your creativity in finding an open area in your community. Electric transmission rights-of-way, industrial sites, or non-landscaped recreational areas are all options. We can help try to connect you with opportunities under powerlines or other energy infrastructure sites.

What kind of technical assistance can we get along the way?

We will provide grantees with brief guidance documents and a list of sources of additional information, for both greenhouse propagation and in-field planting. We will also provide an introductory webinar, and invite you to a tour of a private commercial nursery (in Broadhead, or Westfield), as schedules and travel permits. We are also working to arrange limited individual remote consulting (phone or email) with a contracted private nursery.

What are the reporting requirements?

We will ask for quarterly written updates on grant progress (end of March, June, September) and a final report by December 2018, including photos. We will want to know plant survival rates (both in the greenhouse and in the field) and conditions influencing plant survival. We expect students to report how they are communicating their experience to others.