

Self-Assessment for Pollinator-Friendly and Sustainable Parks

Ensuring your policies, practices and resources advance sustainability and pollinator habitats communicates to your agency and city leadership the value of supporting this work. As you bring your community along through these efforts, you build a community that understands and values these changes, as well as supports them through their own efforts.

Use the questions provided below to assess what elements your agency/team are already doing, what could be implemented in the future, and what goals you can set to strengthen your work to advance sustainable practices, policies and actions.

Administrative and Finance

YES NO

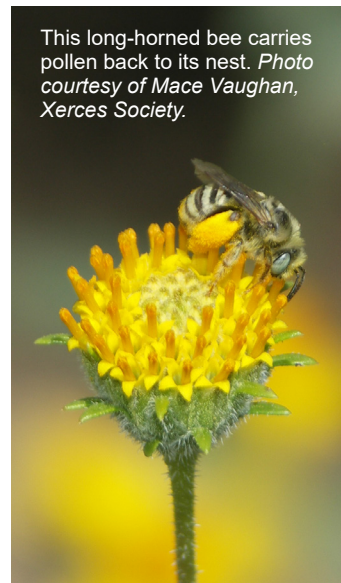
1. Does your agency have policies or guidelines to help it become more pollinator friendly and sustainable? If so, what are they? _____
2. Are native habitat or pollinator protection efforts included in larger park plans?
3. Does your agency have staff members with dedicated roles and responsibilities to advance pollinator protection/native habitat or sustainable practices? If so, what are they?

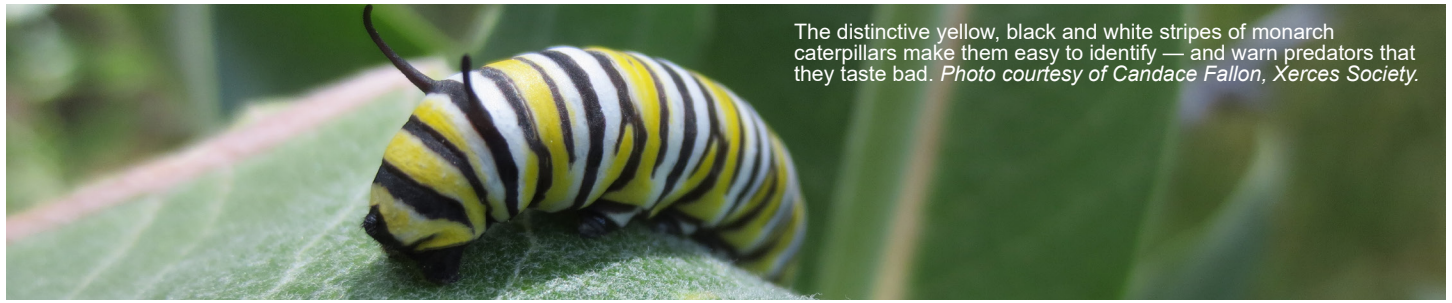
4. Do your full-time staff members receive orientation on these policies and understand their roles in promoting them?
5. Does your agency provide annual training and reinforcement of your policies or guidelines (for seasonal/full time staff and volunteers)?
6. Do staff members engage in committees/groups that are designed to advance, review, update or advocate for related policies and guidelines?
7. Has your agency dedicated funding (operations and/or capital) to support work that advances pollinators or sustainable practices? If so, how and in what ways?

8. Has your agency applied for grants to advance these efforts through education, habitat or other means? If so, which ones? _____
9. Are evaluation and/or audit procedures in place to evaluate the effectiveness of your efforts, their costs and impacts to your agency, and the cost of environmental impacts? If so, who has access and how are you leveraging this data? _____
10. Does your agency do its best to purchase products and services that are environmentally friendly?
11. Do you have a list of environmentally-friendly products or similar guidelines?
12. Does your agency work collaboratively to advance pollinator and sustainable practices with other organizations (private or public)? If so, what organizations are you working with?

13. Does your agency lead any programs that support your community members in adopting/ implementing pollinator protection or sustainable practices? If so what programs?

This long-horned bee carries pollen back to its nest. Photo courtesy of Mace Vaughan, Xerces Society.





The distinctive yellow, black and white stripes of monarch caterpillars make them easy to identify — and warn predators that they taste bad. *Photo courtesy of Candace Fallon, Xerces Society.*

Planning and Preservation

YES NO

1. Does your agency identify and protect open space (grasslands, wetlands, riparian areas, floodplains, greenways, etc.) for habitat, even if habitat may be a secondary benefit (such as when planning green infrastructure)? If so, how? _____

2. Does your agency consider what other properties can incorporate native habitat (golf courses, passive areas, medians, gardens, etc.)?
3. Does your agency provide responsible public access to sensitive natural areas or preserves? If so, how? _____
4. Does your agency increase public awareness of the importance of native habitat and pollinators with interpretive signs, educational fliers/posters or programs within your open spaces?
5. Does your agency collaborate with other municipal departments, other municipalities, conservation groups and/or private landowners to ensure a broad community-supported effort? If so, how? _____
6. Does your agency try to ensure pollinator protection best practices are incorporated when designing or updating park properties? If so, how? _____

7. When planning for and updating parks, does your agency use native perennial species instead of annuals in their landscaping?
8. Does your agency incorporate native plants in landscaping beyond open spaces, such as recreation centers, office buildings, etc.?
9. Is pollinator habitat considered in green infrastructure or transportation corridors?
10. Does your agency have demonstration sites for pollinators or native habitat highlighted in high-traffic areas or traditional park lands (golf courses, parking lots, city center parks, playgrounds, etc.)?
11. Has your agency applied for grants directly related to the planning/design of park lands with pollinator-supporting elements?
12. Does your agency partner with other groups or developers to share best practices for living around native habitat, protecting pollinators or implementing sustainable practices? If so, how? _____
13. Do your park planners work with natural resource staff (or others with native habitat expertise) to create plans?
14. Are management plans included or considered during the park planning process? If so, how? _____

YES NO

15. Has your agency undertaken an inventory of green space and/or habitat to help identify possible areas to advance native habitat in your community or parks? If so, how? _____
16. Has your agency developed a plan to create a system of native habitat sites or corridors to promote pollinator health and mobility in your community? If so, how? _____
17. Has your agency created a checklist of pollinator-friendly assets or guidelines for park development/restoration?

Natural Resource Management**YES NO**

1. Does your agency's budget have dedicated funding for natural resource management including native habitat and maintenance?
2. Do you have maintenance plans for the variety of habitats in your parks/communities?
3. Do the maintenance plans include best practices to improve environmental health, control exotic species and increase biodiversity?
4. Does your agency have a no-mow buffer around bodies of water?
5. Does your agency have a native plant policy or use native plants whenever possible? If so, what policies or practices do you have? _____
6. Does your agency use native plants in natural areas or bioswales to reduce maintenance costs, control erosion, handle water runoff or promote habitat?
7. Does your agency practice permaculture or composting techniques for soil health? If so, how? _____
8. Does your agency have a tree or forest management/development plan?
9. Does your agency have a long-term plan to remove and address exotic or non-native species from parks?
10. Does your agency have a community garden program?
11. Has your agency developed a soil management plan with regular protocols? If so, what are they? _____
12. Does your agency have a list of acceptable native plant species to use in parks and public spaces?
13. Does your agency have a plant list with a wide variety of blooming times to ensure pollen sources are available most of the year?
14. Does your agency propagate native plant species to use in your parks and open spaces? If so what species and amounts? _____
15. Does your agency consider if park usage is compatible with the natural areas or habitat it sits next to?

Maintenance

YES NO

1. Does your agency train maintenance staff regularly on best practices and guidelines for native habitat?
2. Does your agency have low-mow or other mowing policies that are beneficial to pollinators and habitat?
3. Does your agency limit the use of certain chemicals — pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers — across the municipality?
4. Does your agency try to reduce their use of fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides in parks or other green areas?
5. Do you practice manual weeding or other environmentally beneficial maintenance practices (heat, foam, etc.)?
6. Does your agency use prescribed burns to maintain their meadows or other open native areas (if they are able to)?
7. Does your agency practice Integrated Pest Management or organic land management techniques to manage exotic species and pests? If so, what plans or protocols do you have in place? _____
8. Does your agency have guidelines for installation and maintenance of native habitat?
9. Are sites managed by management plans that assess and support protection of habitat and biodiversity?



Man works in the garden beds of the John Marty Community Garden. Photo courtesy of Tualatin Hills Park & Recreation District, Beaverton, Washington County, Oregon.

Education and Programming

YES NO

1. Does your agency operate a nature center or conduct nature programming that includes pollinator and native habitat information? If so, what programs or information do you provide?

2. Does your agency partner with other groups to provide programming (garden clubs, master gardeners, etc.)? If so, who? _____

3. Does your agency provide programs to the public that share best practices they can adopt at home to promote pollinator protection and sustainable practices?
4. Does your agency inform homeowners associations or other groups about practices they can adopt? If so, how? _____

5. Does your agency share practices it is taking (through communications campaigns, programs, interpretive signage, etc.) that could set an example for the general public? If so, how?

6. Does your agency have a community engagement/volunteer program to aid in pollinator efforts, land management or environmental education? If so, what is included and what is the focus(es)? _____
7. Does your agency promote public engagement opportunities that allow community members to engage with and support pollinator/sustainability efforts (throughout the planning, implementation, maintenance, advocacy and future work in these spaces)? If so, how? _____
8. Are your other professionals outside of nature centers or natural areas (e.g., recreation programmers) cross-trained to provide environmental education or engagement opportunities throughout your community?
9. Do you host any public or special events focused on pollinators? If so, what?

10. Does your agency clearly communicate its pollinator and/or sustainability program to public officials, staff and community members?
11. Does your agency partner with other groups to advance pollinator awareness efforts? This could include local libraries; schools; science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) groups; 4H; or other educational groups. If so, who?

12. Does your agency have a lead group in the community that co-designs outreach and education efforts?
13. Does your agency partner with local businesses to promote and advance pollinator protection efforts through education, workshops, etc.? If so, what local businesses? _____



More than 500 observers participated in the 2022 community BioBlitz project in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Photo courtesy of City of Harrisonburg, Virginia.