

RP 291 – Idaho Study of Roadside Habitats for Monarch Butterflies and Other Pollinators

○ Project Description:

The monarch butterfly is listed as a Species of Greatest Conservation Need by the Idaho Department of Game and Fish. Since the 1980s, the western U.S. monarch population has declined by 99 percent. Due to the overall declines in the monarch populations, the monarch butterfly has been petitioned for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA). If the monarch butterfly is listed threatened or endangered, this will bring additional regulations and restrictions to activities performed in transportation and energy/utility ROWs. Many factors have contributed to the monarch decline, but habitat loss and fragmentation is the most detrimental. ITD manages an estimated 82,000 acres of ROW land across the state. The primary goals of this project are to better understand 1) the distribution of monarch butterflies and other pollinators in ITD ROWs, 2) existing and potential habitat for these species in the ROWs, and management practices the department can utilize to support conservation of the monarch and other pollinator species. This study will focus primarily on the Snake River Plain in Idaho.

○ Project Objective:

The objectives of this project include:

- Expanding on preliminary information collected in Monarch habitat in Idaho and specifically focus on ITD Right-of-Ways (ROWs).
- Identifying the relative amount of monarch butterflies and milkweed plants, as well as nectar plants using a field-based approach.
- Assessing pollinator plant abundance including milkweed species and important nectar plant species.
- Assessing best management practices to support Monarchs and pollinators in ITD ROWs

○ Estimated Completion Date: February 28, 2023

○ Budget: \$144,208

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