

August 31st, 2018

Mayor Paula Perotte and City Council
City of Goleta
130 Cremona Dr. #B
Goleta, CA 93117

Dear Mayor Paula Perotte and City Council members,

We are writing to you to express our support of the Draft Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan and 2018 Implementation Plan.¹

We are supportive of the Habitat Management Plan's programs; in particular, the Natural Resources Management Programs and Monitoring, Research, and Adaptive Management Programs which are focused on protecting monarchs and restore or enhance their overwintering habitat at Ellwood Mesa.

We also support the proposed actions of the 2018 Implementation Plan to replant eucalyptus trees to replace the 28 trees which were removed from the grove in 2017. Replacement tree planting is critical so that the microclimatic conditions that monarchs require can be restored as soon as possible. The proposed tree planting, as well as other activities such as implementing an irrigation plan, assessing the grove for hazard trees, and monitoring monarch's use of the grove align with the Xerces Society's approach to monarch butterfly overwintering site restoration which is summarized in our recently published guide for land managers: *Protecting California's Butterfly Groves: Management Guidelines for Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Habitat*.²

Western monarchs overwintering in coastal California have declined more than 95% since the 1980s and the migratory population faces a high risk of extinction in the next few decades.³ The Ellwood Main overwintering site is among the most important western monarch habitat – of the hundreds of sites in California where monarchs spend the winter, Ellwood Main is ranked as the fourth highest priority to conserve, based on the historic monarch population and overall degree of population decline.⁴ Other overwintering sites found within the Ellwood Complex are also important for monarchs and the entire forested area likely acts as a network of more and less suitable habitat which offers the butterflies' redundancy and resiliency to occupy the best habitat in a given year or within a season. Thus, management decisions at the Ellwood Complex have a greater potential to help – or harm – the overall western monarch population than management activities at most other western monarch overwintering sites.

We also recognize the incredible expertise that Dan Meade of Althouse and Meade and Charis van der Heide of Rincon Consultants bring to monarch butterfly habitat conservation, and encourage you to continue consulting with both parties to quickly develop and implement a habitat restoration and management plan for this site, and to address hazards posed by dead trees with minimal disruption to the monarch butterflies. In addition, the Xerces Society is deeply invested in monarch butterfly conservation, and we would be happy to provide further input on the management and restoration of monarch butterfly overwintering habitat within Ellwood Mesa.

Sincerely,



Emma Pelton
Endangered Species Conservation Biologist
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation

References Cited:

1. Draft Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan & 2018 Implementation Plan. 2018. City of Goleta. Accessed August 29th, 2018 at <http://www.cityofgoleta.org>.
2. The Xerces Society. 2017. *Protecting California's Butterfly Groves: Management Guidelines for Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Habitat*. 32+vi pp. Portland, OR: The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.
3. Schultz, C. B., L. M. Brown, E. Pelton, and E. E. Crone. 2017. Citizen science monitoring demonstrates dramatic declines of monarch butterflies in western North America. Biological Conservation DOI 10.1016/j.biocon.2017.08.019.
4. Pelton, E., S. Jepsen, C. Schultz, C. Fallon, and S. H. Black. 2016. *State of the Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Sites in California*. 4+vi pp. Portland, OR: The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation. (Available online at <https://xerces.org/state-of-the-monarch-butterfly-overwintering-sites-in-california/>)