

Sand County Foundation Conservation Brief

January 2024

Inspire future agriculture leaders with Pollinator Habitat Grants for schools



Sand County Foundation's school grants and curriculum guide encourage conservation education through hands-on native habitat plantings for insect pollinators on rural lands.

Pollinators are essential for crop pollination and ecological diversity, but the numbers of wild bees, monarch butterflies, and other native insects have dropped in recent years, partly because of the loss of native wildflower habitat near farmland. By providing teachers with resources for classroom and in-field educational activities, Sand County Foundation is creating conservation opportunities that appeal to rural and urban students.

Pollinator Habitat Grants: Through our competitive Pollinator Habitat Grant Program, agriculture and science teachers apply for grants and partner with local landowners to create or enhance habitat for pollinators and monarch butterflies. Selected schools receive native wildflower seed and seedlings, a training webinar and consultation, and a \$1,000 grant for the school district or FFA chapter for project expenses.

To qualify for a grant, the school needs access to a greenhouse or indoor growing area to raise approximately 600 seedlings of native wildflower species appropriate for their location. Applicants must identify a suitable area (agricultural or working lands preferred) where they will create or enhance pollinator habitat in the spring. Students participate in raising native plants in the greenhouse in late winter, seeding and transplanting outdoors in spring, and managing and monitoring the planting site through the summer and fall.

Since launching the grant program in the fall of 2017, we have awarded grants to 103 high schools across Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and Texas, engaging 11,000 students to plant over 64,000 wildflower plugs.



Pollinator Curriculum Guide: To further support educators and students, we partnered with the University of Wisconsin's Earth Partnership to publish a Pollinator Habitat Curriculum Guide. This free guide provides middle and high school educators with activities that engage students in planning, establishing, managing and monitoring prairie habitat for insect pollinators and grassland birds. In the first few months this guide was available it was downloaded by more than 400 educators across the Midwest and beyond.



All activities are aligned with Common Core and Next Generation Science standards, as well as state agriculture, food, and natural resources standards.

We also deliver workshops that build teachers' ability to use the curriculum guide activities effectively in the field and classroom. We have reached more than 180 instructors at agriculture and environmental educator conferences in Minnesota and Wisconsin.



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FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

Sand County Foundation
www.sandcountyfoundation.org/schoolgrants



Sand County Foundation inspires and empowers a growing number of land owners and managers to ethically care for the land to sustain water resources, build healthy soil, enhance wildlife habitat, and support outdoor recreation.

www.sandcountyfoundation.org