

April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2023

George Thomson  
Parks & Open Space Manager  
City of Goleta - Public Works Department  
130 Cremona Drive, Goleta, CA 93117

Re: Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space monarch butterfly overwintering habitat analysis and recommendations for restoration

Dear Mr. Thomson,

We are writing to you to express our support of the Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space monarch butterfly overwintering habitat analysis and recommendations for restoration prepared for the city by Althouse and Meade, Inc. in February 2023. We support the swift approval of the proposed implementation plan for the habitat management by the City Council.

Implementation of these recommendations—in particular, replanting of trees to replace the standing dead trees proposed for removal during the fuels reduction work and additional restoration plantings, is time sensitive. In fact, we wrote a similar letter of support four years ago for the Ellwood Mesa/Sperling Preserve Open Space Monarch Butterfly Habitat Management Plan: January 2019. Replacement tree planting is critical so that the conditions that overwintering monarchs require can be restored as soon as possible. We support planting a mix of appropriate eucalyptus species (including *Eucalyptus diversicolor*) and native tree species known to be utilized by overwintering monarchs. Eucalyptus diversity is especially important at a site that is already dominated by *Eucalyptus globulus* which has disproportionately suffered from drought. The proposed tree planting, as well as other activities such as implementing an irrigation plan, removing dead wood, 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 guide for land managers: Protecting California's Butterfly Groves: Management Guidelines for Monarch Butterfly Overwintering Habitat (1).

Western monarchs overwintering in coastal California have declined more than 95% from their historic size and the migratory population faces a high risk of extinction (2). The Ellwood Mesa monarch overwintering sites are 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 (3). Thus,

management decisions at the Ellwood Mesa 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 Althouse and Meade, Inc. bring to monarch butterfly habitat conservation, and encourage you to continue consulting with this group to quickly implement the habitat management recommendations for this site, and to address hazards posed by dead trees with minimal disruption to the monarch butterflies.

Sincerely,



Emma Pelton  
Senior Conservation Biologist and Western Monarch Lead  
The Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation  
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References Cited:

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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-incalifornia/>.