

Natural Resources Conservation Service Maine



967 Illinois Avenue, Suite #3
Bangor, ME 04401
www.me.nrcs.usda.gov
[www.twitter.com/NRCSMaine](https://twitter.com/NRCSMaine)

Contact:
Eric Venturini
eric.venturini@xerces.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Want to increase pollinator populations? Apply for NRCS's 2019 Pollinator Initiative

Apply at your local USDA Service Center by January 2019

BANGOR, Maine (Nov. 30, 2018) – Maine is home to 278 different species of native bees – and numerous other pollinators – and they need our help.

The rusty patched bumble bee, once common, has virtually disappeared. Last seen in Maine in 2009, it is now Federally Endangered. Similarly, the yellow-banded bumble bee population in Maine decreased



Yellow-banded bumble bee in a Maine pollinator meadow. This species is under consideration for listing as an Endangered Species. Photo by Eric Venturini

rapidly from 2010 to 2013; it has increased since, but those bees are still rare. The monarch butterfly, another once-ubiquitous species, has declined in numbers by more than 80 percent according to recent reports. And the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is even considering listing the monarch butterfly and the yellow

banded bumble bee for protection under the Endangered Species Act.

Now is the time to act to conserve these important species!

In 2018, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Maine worked with more than thirty growers to contract nearly 40 acres of pollinator habitat and 14,664 linear feet of flowering

hedgerows. **We have once again set aside \$80,000 of NRCS cost-share funds to support pollinator conservation in 2019.**

Applications are prioritized based on: location (e.g., Waldo County contains the last known location of the rusty patched bumble bee and so receives funding priority); benefit to agriculture (growers who depend on pollinators for crop production receive prioritization); and the anticipated benefit of the conservation action.

The following NRCS practices can be used to support pollinators under this statewide initiative:

Core Practices (at least one of the following must be included to qualify for the Pollinator Initiative)

- [Early Successional Habitat \(647\)](#): creating early successional habitat along crop field edges or within forestland
- [Conservation Cover \(327\)](#): planting perennial wildflower meadows for beneficial insects
- [Field Borders \(386\)](#): planting flower rich field edges for beneficial insects
- [Hedgerow Plantings \(422\)](#): establishing rows of flowering woody shrubs in association with crop fields for beneficial insect forage and habitat
- [Tree Shrub Establishment \(612\)](#): establishing flowering trees and shrubs to support pollinator populations
- [Integrated Pest Management \(595\)](#): implement conservation measures to mitigate pesticide risks to pollinators
- [Conservation Crop Rotation \(328\)](#): adjust crop rotation of flowering crops to improve bloom phenology and increase carrying capacity for pollinators in landscape

Supporting Practices (can be funded through initiative, if a core practice is also in contract)

- [Cover Cropping \(340\)](#): plant flowering cover crops of high value to beneficial insects
- [Brush Management \(314\)](#): use to prepare ground for hedgerows and tree and shrub plantings, or to maintain early successional habitat
- [Windbreak/Shelterbelt \(380\)](#): use to buffer pollinator habitat from pesticide drift
- [Mulching \(484\)](#): use to support the establishment of hedgerows or tree and shrub plantings
- [Structures for Wildlife \(649\)](#): install nesting boxes to support populations of mason, leaf-cutter, and orchard bees in spring blooming crops

To apply, visit your local NRCS Field Office and **submit an application by Jan. 18, 2019!**

(<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/me/contact/local/>).

For more information contact Eric Venturini, the Farm Bill Pollinator Conservationist and NRCS Partner Biologist for the Xerces Society and the NRCS. <mailto:eric.venturini@xerces.org>, (207) 478-7612.

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