

**To: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**  
**From: Lori Harris, owner Salt Creek Butterfly Farm**  
**RE: AGAINST listing the Monarch as a threatened species**

**DATE: February 7, 2015**

I am an independent art and nature educator in Illinois. Adding the Monarch to the Threatened Species list would have a direct and devastating effect on my small business, and many other educators' efforts to teach about the monarch.

My business, Salt Creek Butterfly Farm, exists to foster a closer relationship between my community and the natural world through the arts. We specifically raise and study Monarch butterflies. They are local butterflies the community can relate to, they can be raised in a controlled, healthy environment, and I can educate the public about how to easily be stewards of the Monarch habitat –something they can and do follow through with.

Of the thousands of the people I've worked directly with in my art and nature programming, the vast majority had never seen a live monarch before. They'd certainly never seen the moment a monarch curls its abdomen to lay an egg, or a monarch eclose from its chrysalis. These experiences have built strong, lasting bonds between my local community members and our environment. Very few knew that Monarch caterpillars eat milkweed, what milkweed looks like or how to raise it before coming to my Art-in-Nature Butterfly Farm. We provide plants, seeds, and education to build much needed butterfly habitat here in the Midwest.

I have personally donated dozens and dozens of metamorphosis kits to many Chicago- area under privileged schools. Having live, healthy caterpillars in the classroom is something none of these schools could afford. It has been an invaluable teaching tool for approximately 1,300 Chicago-area children last year alone in the classroom.

I donate butterflies to our local nursing home and memory care unit – an experience that generates stories of childhood from people who can't even remember this morning. Monarchs are a touchstone between past and present for this group struggling to remember and experience joy.

I donate butterflies to our local children's grief counseling center where children are able to say "things left unsaid" to their butterfly and release it with their families, finally able to let go of some pain. Monarch releases are an integral part of the bonding, healing process that these programs can provide in my community.

Local and state institutions, mandated by the government to provide monarch education this year, have come to me for programming. The Forest Preserve of Cook County brought in my live monarch traveling experience last summer. The Peggy Notebaert nature museum conducted a teacher training course using my healthy, vibrant stock last spring. Prairie Wildlife Park routinely relies on me for monarch stock

to include in their community outreach programs. Libraries use my metamorphosis kits for community programming. I have developed classroom curriculum centered around live Monarchs that augments the STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum our country's education system is currently implementing. I have additional major institutions slated for programming next season as well. I respect their nature education programming and am glad to be a small part of the tens of thousands of people they ultimately impact in our region.

If the Monarch is added to the endangered/threatened list, my Art-in-Nature education programs will CEASE and my business will likely CLOSE. My students and community will certainly LOSE the opportunity to develop an intense connection to this butterfly. It is unlikely they should care to plant milkweed, or to make room in their lives to be environmental stewards for the Monarch like they do when leaving my classes. It is unlikely they will ever be painting Monarchs using live butterfly models or learning the difference between one butterfly species and another. There is no substitute for seeing and observing the vibrant, living creatures I can provide.

I respectfully request that if this listing does go through, educators, butterfly farmers and caterpillar ranchers, including informal educators such as myself would be EXEMPT from any ban on raising or collecting butterflies on our own properties. I have put great personal financial resources into building my business and honestly feel the loss of it would not only be devastating to me, but to my community as well. See the following photographs for a glimpse of programs that would be eliminated with this listing.

Lori Stralow Harris, owner

Salt Creek Butterfly Farm

These are a few of my early childhood, elementary school, special needs and senior programs that would be eliminated if Monarchs are added to the threatened species list:

