

## Kansas Joins the Monarch Highway

The Kansas Department of Transportation, along with five other state departments of transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, signed an agreement today that will improve pollinator habitat along Interstate 35, a key migratory corridor for Monarch butterflies.

Last year, I-35, which passes through Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, was identified as a corridor that could be enhanced as butterfly habitat through the increased planting of vegetation that provides refuge and a food source.

“Kansas roadsides have been a haven for Monarchs since 2008 when KDOT started planting butterfly milkweed and other native wildflowers on the roadsides,” Scott Shields, KDOT Environmental Scientist, said. “We are excited to partner with other states on I-35 to provide education and habitat for these important pollinator insects.”

This agreement establishes a cooperative and coordinated effort to establish best practices and promote public awareness of the Monarch butterfly and other pollinating insects.

Monarch butterflies hatch in late summer or early fall, wintering in Mexico. In the spring, butterflies begin their 2,000-mile trek north. Along the way, they lay eggs that develop into butterflies that finish the trip and begin the cycle again.

“We are trying to build awareness about the best practices for pollinators,” Shields said. “We are hoping that we can create a habitat that benefits the Monarch butterflies and other critically important pollinating insects so that they can thrive. This benefits everyone in the long run.”