



Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership

Chris Stein, Operation Pollination

As BFG members, you know that the *Bee Friendly Gardening* Program is inclusive of all pollinator species, not just bees. A budding collaborative project that demonstrates this is the *Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership* (MROPP), whose goal is to establish pollinator spaces up and down the entire length of the Mississippi River, from Lake Itasca in Minnesota to the Gulf of Mexico in Louisiana. This includes pollinator habitat spaces for all pollinators, from the regal monarch butterfly to buzzing bees who pollinate our food crops.



First Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership signing, La Crosse, WI (September 2023)

The *Bee Friendly Gardening* Program electronically signed the first *Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership* document in the fall of 2023 (in La Crosse, Wisconsin) along with other environmentally focused organizations. To show real commitment to this collaborative effort, in the winter of 2024 our own *Bee Friendly Gardening* Program Manager Sara Wittenberg trained more than 200 people (who had expressed interest in the MROPP) on how to establish a pollinator garden. This past Earth Day 2024, another *Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership* document was signed, this time in Minneapolis, Minnesota and once again including BFG.

Other organizations who participated in these signing ceremonies and who are committed to pollinator conservation include representatives from Rotary International, the Mississippi River Parkway Commission, the mayor of La Crosse, Wisconsin, the National Heritage Area Program, the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group, the *Operation Pollination* Initiative, the University of Minnesota (Art Department), Monarch

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Joint Venture, the Twin Cities Rotary EcoClub, the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources, the Minnesota Department of Environmental Management, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, Homegrown National Park, Xerces Society, and Pollinator Friendly Alliance.



2nd Mississippi River Operation Pollination Partnership signing, Minneapolis, Minnesota (April 2024)

In 2025, a renewed effort will be made to fully activate the MROPP along the entire length of the Mississippi River. How to do this is quite simple. Interested organizations simply go to <https://esrag.org/operation-pollination> to review and submit the general *Pollinator Resolution* found there, which makes three main points: 1) pollinators are essential for life on Earth, 2) pollinators are in trouble, and 3) we belong to an organization that can do something to help...like the *Bee Friendly Gardening* Program! If you belong to an organization in one of the 10 states that border the Mississippi River, your organization can participate too. Simply go to the website above to submit a *Pollinator Resolution* to show that your organization cares about pollinator health and that it can help. If your organization takes the next step by committing to take action, please also sign a *Pollinator Pledge*. What your organization does is totally up to you, from planting a pollinator garden, handing out seed packets to kids in school, painting a beautiful pollinator mural, to joining a conservation organization like Pollinator Partnership's *Bee Friendly Gardening* Program.

Even if you don't reside in a state bordering the Mississippi River, your organization can easily participate by electronically submitting a brief form to show their support.

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