

The City of Port Colborne's Proposed Plan to Delay the Mid-Summer Roadside Cutting in selected areas.

Issue: Pollinators are a diverse and important group of species that carry pollen between flowers ensuring the development of 1/3 of the fruit and vegetables we eat, as well as multiple species of flowers, shrubs and trees. Pollinators however have been under stress lately. As many of you are aware, our bees are facing a population decline. The Monarch Butterfly who has graced our roadsides for as long as we can remember is also experiencing serious decline.



However there is encouraging information. Recent documentation has shown that there are large amounts of Monarch caterpillars living along our City's roadsides on the Common Milkweed. The work the Port Colborne Environmental Advisory Committee proposes to undertake in this strategy is intended to help support the Monarch Butterfly and the other pollinator populations by providing additional food sources for them. Delaying the second roadside cut along the proposed road allowances discussed in our recommended study until October 1st each year will help ensure the Monarch's protection.

Members of the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC) are meeting and consulting with land owners in the study area to inform them and record concerns landowners and local farmers may have with the delaying of the second road side cut in order to preserve Monarch Butterfly habitat. Comments collected will be used to modify this plan where possible. The EAC proposes that a fund be established with any future savings to be used for nature education programming for the City's youth.

Background: The Monarch Butterfly is listed as a species of concern under the Provincial Endangered Species Act. In February 2014, Presidents Enrique Pena Nieta and Barack Obama and Prime Minister Stephen Harper set up a task force charged with saving this species because Monarch populations are declining precipitously. Our findings to date suggest that some of Port Colborne's rural roadside areas will help butterflies migrating north and south across Lake Erie.

Recommended Analysis: The Port Colborne Environmental Advisory Committee in consultation with the Operations Department is proposing to select a trial area to conduct the delay in cutting to work towards modifying the way the City of Port Colborne manages our roadsides for the future.

For the selected area, the first cutting of roadsides (by the end of June) would be completed as scheduled. The reason for this is that the milkweed plants have almost become fully developed

but have not produced any flowers yet. Therefore, when these plants are cut at this stage they go into a stress mode and produce multiple shoots without ever developing flowers. This is beneficial for farmers because this cut prevents the plant from producing seeds and provides 3rd generation Monarchs a young food source to lay their eggs on during the dry season.

The second cut (completed before the August long weekend) will be omitted in the trial area to protect the Monarch's habitat and to provide a much needed food source for pollinators during the dry summer months. The third cutting will be done after October 1st, in order to provide nectar plants for bees and the other pollinators at this time of year, before hibernation or migration of the species.

Trial area includes: Pinecrest Road and Weaver Road south of Killaly Street East and Cedar Bay Road, as monitoring has shown that these roads in particular have high densities of Monarch butterfly eggs and caterpillars on the roadside milkweed plants.

Public Consultation: Because you are part of the residential and farming community adjoining the roads under consideration, we are leaving leaflets based on this staff report at your home. Where possible members of the committee will answer any questions and take any comments. Where residents are not home, the leaflet will be left in mail boxes together with contact coordinates where you can provide comments and have questions answered. Comments received will be summarized for Council and City Staff to review.

Monitoring of Roadsides: Due to the fact that this is a new initiative, careful and detailed monitoring will be documented in this trial location. Observatory notes will be documented throughout the growing season concentrating on the following:

- Identification of all vegetation alongside selected roads
- Density and height of vegetation
- Seed development and concentration
- Supervision of areas that could be affected by this project, i.e.; agricultural land for signs of roadside plant infestation

The trial duration period for this location will be three years, subsequent to yearly reviews with City Council.

Summary: If this plan is successful, besides saving taxpayer money (roadside cutting costs), Port Colborne will be providing a much needed habitat for the Monarch Butterfly. In addition, a food source for the pollinators will be maintained which in turn will increase yields of produce for farmers and gardeners, and most importantly provide a healthier environment for future generations.



Further Information: For further information or questions please contact Janice Peyton at 905 835 2901 ext. 219 or email eac@portcolborne.ca and an Environmental Advisory Committee member will get back to you quickly.