



National Pollinator Week is June 21-27, 2021

Not everyone thinks of bees, bats, butterflies, birds and other bugs when they consider municipal infrastructure, but eight forward-thinking Franklin County towns and planners at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) do. With National Pollinator Week coming up, FRCOG will continue working with communities on its *Regional Pollinator Habitat Corridor Action Plan*— the first of its kind in Massachusetts!

Native pollinators, including bees, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, bats and hummingbirds, are considered “keystone species” in an ecosystem. These pollinators evolved with native plants and are critical to the health and climate resiliency of ecosystems. Pollinators are threatened by habitat loss, invasive species, pesticides, disease and parasites.

In Massachusetts, over 45% of agricultural commodities, like tree nuts and fruits, berries and many vegetables, rely on pollinators, mainly wild and managed bees, for pollination. The Commonwealth also has a rich diversity of native wild pollinators, including an estimated 380 species of bees and 120 species of butterflies.

With funding from an Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Planning Grant, over the next several months FRCOG will be working with Greenfield, Heath, Shelburne, Conway, Bernardston, Montague, Wendell, and Orange to map local pollinator habitat and resource areas and identify corridor linkages, update local land-use regulations to include requirements for native plantings for development and pollinator-friendly landscape management practices, and create a Pollinator Habitat Corridor Implementation Toolkit.

The plan will be expandable, so that with additional funding and interest from other Franklin County towns, regional pollinator corridors can be expanded across the county. Local level strategies such as these are critically needed to respond to climate change, habitat loss, and declining populations of wild, native pollinator species. The sustainability of our local ecosystems, farms, and food systems is linked to pollinators.

Visit <https://www.pollinator.org/pollinator-week> to find information and activities for all ages and join with others across the country to celebrate pollinators and spread the word about what we can do to protect them through strategies like:

- ✓ Plant a garden to provide, food, nesting and overwintering habitat. Avoid pesticides use, and avoid purchasing plants and trees that have been treated with neonicotinoids.
- ✓ Build a bee condo
- ✓ Be involved in FRCOG’s project. Contact Kimberly Noake MacPhee, kmacphee@frcog.org