



FORESTS **FOR**
MONARCHS

LA CRUZ HABITAT PROTECTION PROJECT



2026
ANNUAL REPORT



The impact of years of forest loss. Once small streams, years of erosion have carved these waterways into deep ravines, showing why restoring trees and protecting soil is critical to building resilient landscapes.

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DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

As I reflect on this year, one word keeps coming to mind: resilience.

We see it every year in the forests of central Mexico. We see it in the monarchs that travel thousands of miles against extraordinary odds, returning to the same mountains, generation after generation. We see it in young trees taking root through changing weather and harsh conditions, and in the communities that continue showing up to restore and protect the forests they call home. This year, we have also seen encouraging signs of the monarch's own resilience - a reminder of what is possible when nature is given the opportunity to recover.

As Forests for Monarchs prepares to enter our 30th year, resilience feels especially meaningful. Like many small nonprofits, we face uncertainty about what the coming years will bring. What is not uncertain is the need for this work. Forests still need to be restored. Monarch habitat still needs protection. Communities still need access to native trees and the resources to care for their land. And our changing climate makes healthy forests more important, not less.

For nearly three decades, Forests for Monarchs has kept planting - through changing climates, changing circumstances, and changing generations. As we look toward 2027, we carry that same determination forward. There is still so much work to do, and we remain committed to doing it together.

Megan Soltani

MEGAN SOLTANI
Executive Director

OUR MISSION:

La Cruz Habitat Protection Project, Inc. (dba Forests for Monarchs), reforests land in and around the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, where millions of monarch butterflies spend each winter, and in the Highland Lakes Area of Michoacán, Mexico. Our goal is to help conserve the monarch butterfly winter habitat while aiding the surrounding communities in creating a sustainable livelihood supported by good forest stewardship.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Monarchs roosting on a tree in el Rosario, the largest sanctuary site.

STATE OF THE MONARCH

The eastern migratory monarch population gave us reason for hope this year. During the 2025 - 2026 overwintering season, monarch colonies occupied 2.93 hectares (7.24 acres) of forest in central Mexico - an increase of 64% from the 1.79 hectares (4.42 acres) recorded the previous winter.

This year's growth builds on the increase recorded the year before, when monarchs gained ground despite significant drought conditions along their migratory route. Together, these consecutive increases offer an encouraging reminder of the monarch's remarkable resilience. Monarch populations naturally fluctuate year to year, influenced by conditions throughout their extraordinary migration: weather, breeding success, the availability of milkweed and nectar-producing plants, exposure to insecticides and herbicides, and habitat quality across Mexico, the United States, and Canada.

Progress in the Forest

There was also encouraging news from the monarchs' overwintering habitat. Forest degradation within the core zone of the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve decreased to 6.3 acres, compared with 9.21 acres the previous year. Illegal logging, forest fires, and drought accounted for most of the recorded loss.

Still, the long-term picture remains concerning. Thirty years ago, overwintering monarch colonies covered nearly 45 acres of forest. Today, habitat loss and degradation, extreme weather, climate change, and insecticide exposure remain significant threats throughout the monarch's range.

Resilience Needs All of Us

The most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species Status Assessment estimates that, under projected future conditions, the eastern migratory population faces a 56–74% probability of reaching the extinction threshold within approximately 60 years; for the western population, the risk is even greater. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has proposed listing the monarch as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. A final decision was expected in 2025 but has now been delayed until 2030, leaving monarchs without federal protections in the meantime.

This year's increase reminds us that the monarch's story is not finished. Across North America, communities, scientists, conservation organizations, landowners, volunteers, and individuals are restoring habitat, planting milkweed and native flowers, protecting forests, and creating space for monarchs to complete their remarkable migration.

You are Part of That Story

Every tree planted with Forests for Monarchs helps restore and protect the forests these butterflies depend on at the end of their thousands-of-miles journey. This year's numbers give us hope - and reinforce why continuing this work matters.

Sources: <https://monarchconservation.org/2025-2026-population-numbers-released>
<https://www.worldwildlife.org/news/stories/monarch-butterfly-population-increases-64-percent/>
<https://www.fws.gov/our-work/pollinators/save-monarch>

PROGRAM UPDATES:

Growing Forests Together

Behind every tree planted this year is a network of people who make our work possible - from our team in Mexico and the communities who plant and care for these forests to the partners and donors who invest in their future.

We are deeply grateful to Salesforce, Plant for the Planet, the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association and Avocados from Mexico, Arbor Day, Vermont Woods Studios, Meshewa Farm Foundation, and the Premack Law Office for their significant support of the 2026 planting season, as well as to every individual donor whose contributions make this work possible. Whether supporting ten trees or tens of thousands, every gift becomes part of a much larger landscape of restoration.

Strengthening How We Measure Our Forests

Planting a tree is only the beginning. Understanding what happens in the years that follow is essential to ensuring that our restoration work creates healthy, resilient forests.

This year, Forests for Monarchs continued strengthening our monitoring program, focusing on more consistent, data-driven evaluation. In June, our team spent time in the field with Michiel Grobler, an ecological entomologist, forester, and expert from Cape Town, South Africa, who worked alongside our staff to review current practices, provide hands-on training, and help us identify opportunities to strengthen our protocols.

This work is helping us build a more rigorous approach to tracking survival, understanding changing conditions across planting sites, and using what we learn to continually improve how and where we restore forests.

Celebrating a Decade of Partnership

After ten years and more than two million trees, an extraordinary chapter in Forests for Monarchs' history is coming to a close.

Our partnership with the Mexican Hass Avocado Importers Association (MHAIA) supported far more than trees in the ground. Together, we expanded restoration efforts, helped launch the Avocado Institute, created a documentary sharing the story of monarch habitat conservation, and invested in the communities and landscapes at the heart of our work.

As this decade-long partnership concludes, we are incredibly grateful for what we accomplished together and for MHAIA's belief in our work over the past ten years. The forests established through this partnership will continue growing for decades to come - a lasting legacy of what long-term collaboration can make possible.

Forests for Monarchs featured in 'The Atlantic'

This summer, The Atlantic magazine featured Forests for Monarchs, bringing our work and the forests of central Mexico to a new audience.

The feature brought national attention to the challenges facing the monarch butterfly's overwintering forests and the restoration work taking place in the surrounding communities. For our team, it was an opportunity to share a story nearly three decades in the making - and to bring greater visibility to the people on the ground who make this work possible.

As we prepare to enter our 30th year, that recognition feels particularly meaningful. The challenges facing monarchs and their forests remain significant, but so does the determination of the people working to protect them.

Restoring forests today means protecting the land future generations will call home.





Blackberry bushes are planted around site borders to act as natural barriers and an economic resource.

INNOVATION IN THE FOREST

For nearly 30 years, Forests for Monarchs has worked alongside communities in central Mexico to restore native forests. But successful restoration requires more than repeating what has worked in the past. Changing climate conditions, degraded soils, invasive vegetation, and the unique characteristics of each site require us to continue learning and adapting.

With Salesforce Support

We are exploring new approaches designed to help us better understand how forests recover - and how we can give young forests the strongest possible start.

Applied Nucleation

Rather than planting trees uniformly across an entire site, applied nucleation establishes strategically placed clusters of native trees designed to create small islands of habitat. Over time, these clusters may encourage natural regeneration as seeds disperse and vegetation establishes between them.

Our work is helping us explore where this approach may complement traditional reforestation, particularly in landscapes where encouraging natural forest recovery could create more diverse and resilient ecosystems.

Looking Below the Surface

Healthy forests begin with healthy soil. Through our soil work, we are examining conditions beneath our restoration sites to better understand how soil quality and other characteristics may influence tree establishment and long-term forest recovery.

By pairing what we see above ground with better information about what is happening below it, we hope to make increasingly informed decisions about site preparation, species selection, planting, and long-term management.

Natures Fencing: Blackberries

Blackberry bushes are being incorporated into select restoration sites as part of a mixed-species approach. Planted as natural barriers, they can help protect young trees and reduce pressure on newly planted seedlings while also providing a crop that can generate income for local communities.

With Salesforce's support, we are exploring how productive species like blackberry can complement native tree planting - creating restoration strategies that support both healthy forests and the people who care for them.

Learning Today, Strengthening Tomorrow's Forests

Each of these efforts asks a different question, but they share the same goal: How can we restore forests more effectively and build greater resilience for the future?

Reforestation is a long-term process, and innovation does not always mean finding an immediate answer. It means testing, measuring, learning, and adapting. With partners willing to invest not only in trees, but also in the science and learning behind them, we can continue improving the way we restore forests for generations to come.

2026 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



1,064,777

native trees planted



976

hectares of degraded forest
restored and cleared land
reforested



592

volunteers that supported
reforestation efforts (reported)



24

communities and
landowners impacted



70%

2025 tree survival rate

Monarchs roosting on a tree at el Rosario, the largest sanctuary site for the monarch's winter habitat.

2025 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Total Support & Revenue

\$510,105.00

Total Expenses

\$321,814.00

More than 80% of our expenses supported program and mission work.

Where our support comes from

Grants & Foundations

\$371,190.68

Corporate Support

\$100,800.00

Individual Contributions & Public Support

\$37,899.54

How our funds were used

80.5% Program Services

10% Management & General Administration

9.5% Fundraising

In 2025, over 80% of our total expenses were directed to reforestation and conservation efforts. Forests for Monarchs operates with a lean structure to ensure every donor dollar creates maximum impact. Our board is 100% volunteer, and the only administrative position we compensate is our director - keeping our focus where it belongs: on reforestation and community-led conservation.

This report provides a snapshot of our reforestation specific program expenses. For a more detailed look at our financials, please see our 2025 Form 990, available on our website under the "Reports & Finances" tab.

Thanks to your support, we continue to turn contributions into lasting, measurable impact across monarch and forest habitats.



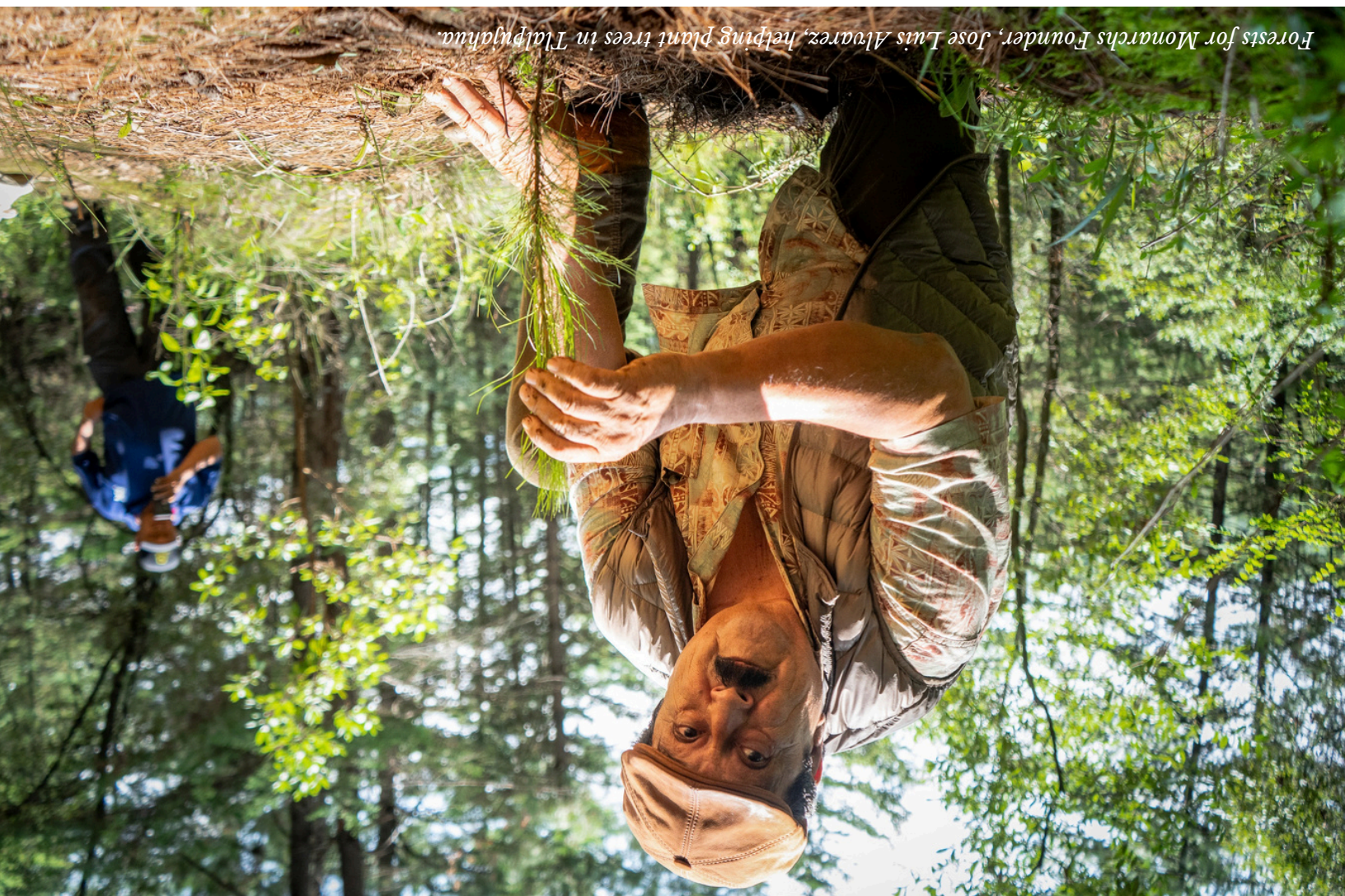
FORESTS FOR MONARCHS

PO BOX 16129
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Your donation directly supports the production of native trees in communities around the Monarch Biosphere Reserve and the Highland Lakes Watershed Region.



www.forestsformonarchs.org/donate



Forests for Monarchs Founder, Jose Luis Alvarez, helping plant trees in Tlalpujahua.