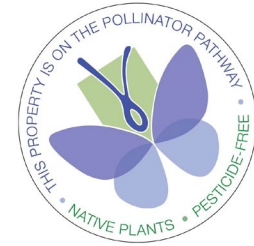




Hudson to  
Housatonic



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Pollinators Get a Helping Hand in Cross-state Collaboration

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**New Canaan, CT** - This year, the eastern monarch butterfly population is expected to be 144 percent larger than last year and higher than it's been in over a decade! We can thank the dedication of municipalities, local farmers and gardeners, and initiatives like Pollinator Pathways – a regional program that promotes the health of pollinators, critical to food and ecosystems, through conservation, education, and research – for contributing to increasing numbers of monarchs.

The Pollinator Pathway emerged from landowner engagement in activities during the early days of the Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) Regional Conservation Partnership. H2H is an interstate (Fairfield County, CT and Dutchess, Putnam, and Westchester Counties, NY) collaboration of 50+ land trusts and conservation groups working together to increase the rate of land protection in the region. This conservation initiative originally was supported by a grant from the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry and is currently co-coordinated by Westchester Land Trust and Highstead. H2H serves as a regional hub in southwestern Connecticut and eastern New York to advance the pace and practice of regional land protection and stewardship through networking and information exchange, including bringing members of the Pollinator Pathway community together for workshops, mapping exercises, and field-based events.

Yesterday, H2H and the Pollinator Pathway Steering Committee hosted a Pollinator Pathway All-Town Meeting at Grace Farms in New Canaan, CT, for dozens of community members interested in learning about the importance of pollinators. The meeting included a talk by Dr. Kimberly Stoner of the CT Agricultural Experiment Station which focused on the science of pollinators and their habitat needs. According to Dr. Stoner, pollinators support the reproduction of 87% of all plant species worldwide, and they are required for nearly all of our fruit, nut, and fruiting vegetable crops. "There are a lot of threats to the health of pollinators, including from diseases, pesticides, and climate change, but the threat that all of us can address is the loss of habitat with biologically diverse, pesticide-free sources of pollen and nectar throughout the growing season," says Dr. Stoner. "The Pollinator Pathway initiative in the Hudson to Housatonic region has been remarkably effective in organizing communities to learn about the needs of pollinators and to act on that knowledge to create corridors of native plants that will benefit pollinators and other wildlife and bring additional environmental and ecological benefits to the region." Pollinator Pathway experts also shared information about the tools, communication techniques, and corporate engagement best practices that were used in the launch towns.

Galvanized by efforts of the Wilton Land Conservation Trust, the Norwalk River Watershed Association (NRWA), and other H2H members, the Pollinator Pathway was inspired by the efforts of Sarah Bergmann in Seattle, WA, and initiatives elsewhere in the world to protect and increase numbers of bees, butterflies, and other

pollinators. “Most importantly, we connect— not just our towns, wetlands, forests, and trails but our people and, ultimately, our generations,” says Donna Merrill, the founder of our Pollinator Pathway and Executive Director of the Wilton Land Conservation Trust.

Community by community, Pollinator Pathway volunteers work with public and private landowners to create a passageway of pesticide-free, native-planted habitats stretching east to west from the Housatonic River to the Hudson River. More than two dozen towns in the H2H landscape have joined the Pollinator Pathway program with new towns signing on nearly each week, with organizers in each town adapting the program to their community. The program can also strengthen relationships with landowners in the partnership’s priority areas, bridging the gap between fostering a stewardship ethic and deciding to permanently protect one’s land. A centralized website created for the initiative ([www.pollinator-pathway.org](http://www.pollinator-pathway.org)) serves as a repository of resources and listings of community-driven events, and allows each town that signs on to create a page for its own Pathway.

“To join the Pollinator Pathway, just add some native plants, provide fresh water, leave the leaves over winter, and avoid pesticides. If you plant it, they will come,” says Louise Washer, President of the Norwalk River Water Association and one of the founders of the Pollinator Pathway initiative. “To start one in your town, check out the resources at [Pollinator-pathway.org](http://Pollinator-pathway.org). Convene your team, plan your path, launch with a town event celebrating pollinators, then dig in—plant native trees, shrubs, and perennials in town and at home. Mark your success with Pollinator Pathway signs to help spread the word, neighbor to neighbor and town to town.”

*H2H envisions a landscape mosaic abundant in forests, farms, wildlands, and waterways of the Hudson to Housatonic Region enriching the quality of life for all who live, work and play here. With a service area of over one million acres and more than \$1.5 million of funder and partner investment, H2H partners meet regularly and advance the H2H mission through municipal engagement, landowner outreach, partner trainings, and strategic land protection. Visit <http://h2hrpc.org> for more information on the H2H partnership and activities.*