

Activists blame GMOs and pesticides for monarch butterfly decline in west

As monarch butterfly populations dwindle to unprecedented low levels, activists say the colorful and far-ranging insects need protection of the Endangered Species Act to survive.

In a formal listing [petition](#) to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, a coalition of advocacy groups say the widespread use of pesticides and genetically modified crops are the biggest threats to the butterflies.

In the petition, the Center for Biological Diversity, the Center for Food Safety, the Xerces Society and renowned monarch scientist Dr. Lincoln Brower say monarch butterflies have declined by more than 90 percent in less than 20 years. By some estimates, they may have lost more than 165 million acres of habitat — an area about the size of Texas — including nearly a third of their summer breeding grounds.

Federal biologists will review the petition. If they decide the species is warranted for listing, more studies and reviews would be done before a final listing decision is made. The Fish and Wildlife Service must now issue a “90-day finding” on whether the petition warrants further review.

Read full original article: [Biodiversity: Endangered species protection sought for dwindling monarch butterflies](#)