

PPAN Chapter Guidelines

People & Pollinators Action Network (PPAN) relies on willing volunteers to increase organizational capacity and address the urgent need to protect Colorado's biodiversity. Regional chapters are best suited to lead this work because they have local relationships with community leaders, residents, businesses, organizations, and others to build a change movement.

Chapter volunteers take a leading role in forwarding PPAN's mission of working across Colorado to promote regenerative land management practices, safeguard public health, and preserve biodiversity to make our state a safe haven for all who live here—from pollinators to people. PPAN is the only organization working at the grassroots, municipal, and state levels to advocate for policies and practices that reduce and eliminate the use of pesticides and to create and connect swaths of pollinator-safe habitat with the intent of reversing the drastic decline of pollinator populations—upon which our very existence depends.

PPAN Chapters may form when a group of dedicated advocates determines a strong local interest in promoting PPAN's values. Chapter leaders are the point of contact for PPAN staff and board of directors and lead chapter communications. They help guide the development of local projects, programs, education, outreach, and policy efforts with support from PPAN.

Each Chapter has its own unique character and can determine which activities and actions resonate with members.

PPAN currently has Chapters in Metro Denver, Boulder County, and Northern Colorado.

Statement of Values

1. The Importance of Pollinators

Let's first start with - what are pollinators? They are a broad set of species – mostly insects, but also birds, bats, and other species – responsible for a great deal of plant reproduction. Many plant species require an external organism to move pollen from the male part of the plant to the female part in order to reproduce. This organism is often an insect feeding on the pollen and, in the process, is moving some of that pollen around, enabling the plant to reproduce.

The most well-known and iconic species that perform this service for plants are the honey bee and various butterflies, including the monarch. However, there are thousands of native bees, hundreds of species of butterflies, and many other insects and birds that do this both in agricultural production and natural ecosystems. Honey bees are typically managed in hives by people and are an introduced species from Europe. Wild bee species are typically solitary and can nest in the ground or in plant stems and are not usually managed by people. Often this distinction between their “lifestyles” is framed as managed pollinators that can be thought of as more like livestock versus native ones that are wild.

There are many factors contributing to our concern for pollinators as well as for people. Most of the challenges for the health of pollinators also affect people and, in fact, the potential decline of pollinators has direct consequences for human survival as well.

PPAN educates about the importance of pollinators as key to the health of productive ecosystems.

2. Habitat Preservation

Biodiversity is essential to healthy ecosystems on our planet. When we talk about biodiversity, we're talking about having enough varied species of living beings—from the tiniest cellular organisms to insects to plants, birds, mammals and humans. We rely on this diversity to make a healthy and interconnected web of species. We need this diversity for ecosystem health as well as human health.

Preserving habitat is a foundational element for biodiverse ecosystems to flourish. Unfortunately, we face the continuing challenge of habitat loss from multiple sources. When we develop areas for human habitation, agriculture, or large business needs, that habitat is not available for the species that once lived there. As a result, food sources disappear, and these species cannot find enough to eat. Monocultures, as the name suggests, also pose serious challenges for biodiversity. Think about big green lawns—the largest single crop in the U.S.—with no flowers, or big agricultural systems that have one crop covering thousands of acres that may or may not bloom at all—corn and wheat are two examples.

Regenerative agriculture works with natural systems that promote biodiversity and limits the need for inputs such as synthetic pesticides and fertilizers.

PPAN advocates for a transition away from chemically-dependent agricultural systems that drive biodiversity loss.

PPAN is committed to habitat preservation for pollinators and actively engages in projects and outreach to see additional lands protected. PPAN also supports efforts to reclaim and restore degraded habitats.

3. Pesticide Use and Its Effect on Pollinators and Human Health

In the past 50 years, pesticide use has increased dramatically. This includes, but is not limited to, insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and rodenticides. While pesticides are often considered essential to farming, they do not always reach their intended targets and wind up contaminating our water, soil and air and increased and overuse of pesticides is also a concern for public lands, school grounds, and residential yards and gardens.

A relatively new class of insecticides are the neonicotinoids. These are systemic pesticides that can cause an entire plant to have the pesticide within it—leaves, pollen, etc. Moreover, these pesticides are water-soluble, which means they can leach into the soil, harming earthworms and other soil-dwelling species. They also can be taken up by the roots of other nearby plants. While these pesticides are intended for certain insect species, they do not discriminate and increasingly studies show that there are both direct and long-term unintended consequences for non-target species such as bees, butterflies, and birds.

Herbicide use has increased, especially with the prevalence of GMO crops that are “Roundup Ready.” For example, more than 90% of corn grown in the U.S. is genetically modified in this way and usually coated with systemic insecticides. This allows farmers to eliminate weeds with broad spraying practices because the crops are not susceptible to herbicide application. Unfortunately, some weeds are developing resistance and more critically, new scientific studies are showing that ingestion of herbicides can have both lethal and sub-lethal effects on pollinators as well. New stronger formulations or combinations of chemicals may be used when an insect or plant pest develops resistance to a pesticide.

PPAN does not condone the use of any neonicotinoid insecticides or other pesticides that are highly toxic to bees. This policy extends to landscaping materials, including plants and seeds, that have been treated with neonicotinoids.

PPAN is aware that there are situations where pesticide use may be warranted to control a noxious weed monoculture on large landscapes. We recommend creating a management plan to transition away from pesticide-intensive practices before any pesticide treatment.

The preferred alternative for pest management will follow an approach that takes the whole ecosystem into account. An integrated pest management (IPM) approach is acceptable if pesticides are only used when there is a justifiable need for the pesticide application. A justified use is supported by evidence that a pest or disease outbreak exists that has reached a threshold level where it will cause significant harm. Pest management will also avoid cosmetic applications.

PPAN advocates for trainings on ecological management and integrated pest management for persons responsible for pest management.

People of color are disproportionately impacted by poor health outcomes due to pesticide exposure where they live and work. For example, they may live on or near agricultural fields regularly treated with chemicals, come into direct contact while applying pesticides, or bear a health burden by living near industrial chemical sites or petroleum refineries.

Our Commitment to Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

People and Pollinators Action Network is committed to inclusion and equity. We firmly believe that all people deserve to live in an environmentally healthy world, free from poisons in their food, neighborhoods, and work lives. We recommit ourselves to recognizing the dangers of pesticides to all living beings, from the smallest wild bee to the laborer in the field, to the purchaser of non-organic food, to the pesticide applicator. We acknowledge the privilege at work in the use of pesticides, that many people who order the

application of pesticides are not the ones who apply the toxins. We continue to work on protecting those who have no choice but to risk exposure to pesticides, either because of chemical plants in their neighborhoods, pesticide drift, or occupational exposure. We work to remember, always, the importance of biodiversity to healthy ecosystems while remaining aware that pesticides reduce biodiversity. We work to remain aware, always, that a profound lack of equity exists in human access to healthy ecosystems. We commit anew to improving access to healthy ecosystems for people of all backgrounds and income levels.

4. Climate Change

Our climate is changing. Ice caps are melting. Weather is more severe. While we've heard much about the impacts of climate change on polar bears and humans, there has not been as much focus on the effects of a changing climate on pollinators, but the impacts could be severe—particularly for declining species and specialists (i.e., species that depend on a single plant for survival).

Temperature changes shift growing and blooming seasons, impacting available food sources for many pollinators and the ability of species to live in certain areas. For instance, if plants bloom earlier in the year due to warmer climates and insect pollinators have not yet emerged from their winter nesting sites, it leads to a mismatch in available ecological services. Warmer temperatures have also forced species, such as hummingbirds, to abandon their native areas for more cooler and stable environments, threatening their very survival. Similarly, butterflies like the Monarch are sensitive to temperature change as is the plant upon which they depend—milkweed. Altered migration patterns and delayed plant development due to climate change places the already threatened Monarch at even greater risk.

The global dependence on synthetic pesticides and fertilizers has created an unfortunate treadmill that contributes to climate change as well. In a nutshell, from cradle to grave, the production and use of these petroleum-based products are destroying essential microorganisms in our soils that mitigate its ability to store significant amounts of carbon dioxide or retain adequate moisture.

PPAN advocates for policies that reduce and eliminate pesticide use to build healthy soil for climate resilience and ecological stability. As well, protecting, restoring, and connecting large swaths of healthy and diverse native habitat will help pollinators withstand the impacts of climate change.

PPAN encourages the use of native planting because native species are adapted to the local climate and require few resources to establish and maintain. Root systems of native plants are adept at storing carbon.

5. The Importance of Education

To protect habitat, reduce the use of pesticides, and create a brighter, healthier future for pollinators and ourselves, PPAN recognizes the importance of education and outreach. These outreach efforts extend from school children to homeowners to managers of public lands and school grounds to decision-makers and elected officials. PPAN accomplishes this outreach through channels including the Colorado Pollinator Summit, webinars focused on best practices for helping pollinators, plant exchanges, and resources on our website.

PPAN encourages Chapters to host events and speakers, and to share educational resources within their communities.

Chapter Obligations and Expectations

PPAN Chapters will be expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Chapters shall only operate within the geographic area agreed to by PPAN and the Chapter;
2. Chapters shall follow PPAN's Statement of Values as expressed in the preceding section. This includes PPAN's position on the use of pesticides and habitat protection. If the chapter wishes to take a position on a controversial topic that PPAN has not weighed in on, the chapter must consult with the PPAN staff or Board of Directors;
3. Chapter leadership will be chosen by the participants in the chapter and will work closely with PPAN staff or the Board of Directors. Chapter leaders may have the opportunity to join the PPAN Board of Directors;
4. Chapters will track local impact from its events and activities by collecting the names and contact information of those in attendance, counting the number of participants attending, and by tracking volunteer participation;
5. PPAN welcomes the development of new educational resources in consultation with staff or the Board of Directors.
6. Chapter activities may include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Education and outreach
 - Events that further PPAN's mission
 - Speaker forums
 - Pollinator planting projects
 - Tabling at local events
 - Promotion of Pollinator Safe Communities Program
 - Advocacy with local governments and parks staff
7. Chapters shall consult PPAN's staff or Board of Directors if a local fundraising effort is undertaken. Funds raised by a chapter may be reinvested in local activities at PPAN's discretion. In addition, PPAN may offer a small budget to support local events.

Benefits of Chapter Affiliation with PPAN

1. Support from PPAN's staff in planning and promoting events, attending meetings, sharing strategies, and using PPAN marketing materials;
2. Ability to work under the aegis of the PPAN brand, building from PPAN's policy work, and utilizing the website and branded materials;
3. Potential chapter leadership representation on the PPAN Board of Directors;
4. Use of PPAN email addresses;
5. Access to PPAN's shared Google Drive;
6. Access to PPAN's roster of volunteers;
7. Access to PPAN's partner network;
8. Leverage of PPAN's network to promote events;
9. Access to a small budget, determined by PPAN, for event hosting;
10. Insurance coverage by PPAN's policy in certain contexts;
11. Access to PPAN's experts on pollinators, pesticides, and habitat preservation.

Please reach out to info@peopleandpollinators.org if you are interested in starting a PPAN Chapter in your region.