

Statement of Intent Concerning the Monarch Preserve

Tract 2262, The Widmark Subdivision

The monarch study by Richard G. Little, a County Entomologist & Biologist, during the fall and winter of 98-99 resulted in a two-acre Monarch Preserve being established as a part of the subdivision. During the study period the number of monarchs using the site varied with a maximum number estimated at 250. When comparing this autumnal (temporary) site with that of the Woodlands development which has an 80,000 monarch true overwintering site, this site pales by comparison. The Woodlands monarch site however, is physically not that different and thus I believe this site can be improved significantly.

An arbitrary goal of creating a 'true' overwintering site with 5000 monarchs in five years has been set. To achieve this goal, significant improvements to the preserve are now being made. The improvements involve creating a microclimate desired by the monarch butterflies and thereby enticing them to "stay the winter". Basically that means minimal wind, moist ambient clean air and a canopy of trees under which they can "hang out" with protection from direct sunlight. There may be other factors we don't understand or know about. For example the dead decaying and moldy eucalyptus throughout this preserve does create a smell or an atmosphere that may be desirable; we don't know.

Many of the needed improvements have already been made with approximately 20% remaining. The corners have been located. Fence posts are in place along the boundaries between lots 1 and 2 and the preserve. As a convenience while work is being done on the preserve, the fencing will not be finished until the preserve is essentially done. Water has been brought down. A waterline with water faucets every 50 feet has been installed along the fence line. Rain bird sprinklers are in place along the western boundary adjacent to lot 2. Trellises with sprinklers and rain bird sprinklers have been constructed in a semicircle around the aggregation area. Water faucets and rain bird sprinklers have been placed throughout the aggregation area and the main clearing. Approximately 100-seedling eucalyptus has been planted, mostly transplanted E. globulus (blue gum), plus 46 other. An additional 20 eucalyptus has yet to be planted. Approximately 80 shrubs and perennials have been planted many on experimental basis to see what does well around eucalyptus. Some of the eucalyptus and shrubs have been planted as an experimental nectar source for the monarch butterflies.

Wind protection from seedlings planted now will not be of any benefit for many years. Existing mature eucalyptus on the other hand, in poor to fair condition now will benefit significantly with proper care and water during the dry summer months. If the foliage on existing eucalyptus can be increased by "say" 25-30% within the next eight months, that would have an immediate positive impact on the microclimate and may result in an increase in the number of monarch butterflies this fall.

Richard Little has been a source of information over the last year. Richard has provided me with books and other reading materials that have been very enlightening. I am certain Richard has as his primary objective the welfare of the monarch butterflies. My primary objective is to create an attractive monarch overwintering site "of some

significance" that will be of value to the landowner (me at this time). In doing so a win-win-win situation will result. The monarch butterflies will benefit, the County will be happy, and the landowner will not begrudge a well-planned attractive preserve in his backyard that can be appreciated and enjoyed, thus adding value to the property. It will also be in the best interest of future landowners to maintain the preserve, probably the trickiest part of this whole thing.

Richard Little and I have a good working relationship. Richard has agreed to assist me. Although, our objectives are not quite the same, I believe we will both prevail.

During the next five years and probably beyond, a Monarch Preserve Log will become an unofficial part of the preserve. This log, more like a scrapbook, will contain anything from guests visiting the preserve to important data, pictures and observations. If the preserve is successful in attracting significantly more butterflies, then I will make the preserve available to others interested in studying or just viewing this unique biological phenomena.

Landowner / Developer,


George Widmark