

**Resolution in support of efforts to create and implement a City Ordinance
Banning the release of commercially raised butterflies in San Francisco**

The Policy Committee recommends to the Commission on the Environment the approval of the following DRAFT Resolution:

WHEREAS, The Environmental Protection Element and the Open Space Element of the General Plan have established that the City and County of San Francisco has a duty to protect the natural environment; and,

WHEREAS, The City's Precautionary Principle reinforces the City's duty to enhance, protect and preserve San Francisco's environment; and,

WHEREAS, the Commission on the Environment has adopted a resolution in support of biological diversity; and

WHEREAS, Releasing commercially raised butterflies, as is sometimes practiced at gatherings such as weddings, celebrations, and other events, can negatively impact indigenous butterfly populations and agency and community efforts to conserve them; and,

WHEREAS, The commercial transport and release of butterflies perturbs our ability to understand the biogeography (natural distribution, breeding locations, migratory patterns, etc.) of butterfly species, and therefore our ability to determine their habitat and conservation needs; and,

WHEREAS, Experts on butterfly conservation have also declared that releases may present problems through the transfer of disease from wild habitats, laboratories, or industrial breeding facilities to other colonies, where die-off may result or diseases may weaken wild populations and make them more susceptible to other stressors; and,

WHEREAS, Although USDA permits are required to ship butterflies between states and permits are not issued for shipment across the Continental Divide, the USDA does not require that the butterflies be free of diseases; and,

WHEREAS, Experts state that release of non-native and/or commercially raised butterflies can cause the introduction of deleterious genes into local populations, which could negatively influence the survivorship potential of native butterflies; and,

WHEREAS, Monarch butterflies in particular have experienced a serious decline in California, and San Francisco can help in the conservation and recovery of this and other species for the benefit of the ecosystem and to allow the people of California and Mexico to continue to experience the wonder of these creatures in their natural habitats, following their natural migrations and lifecycles; and,

WHEREAS, Many San Franciscans believe that butterflies are animals to be respected and valued as part of the City's natural heritage and should not be used as decorations or for entertainment; therefore, be it,

RESOLVED that the Commission on the Environment supports and endorses efforts to ban the release of commercially raised Lepidoptera (butterflies and moths) within the City and County of San Francisco through an ordinance to be approved by the Board of Supervisors.



NORTH AMERICAN
BUTTERFLY ASSOCIATION

4 Delaware Road, Morristown, NJ 07960 tel. 973-285-0907 fax 973-285-0936

Visit our website at www.naba.org

August 18, 2013

To Whom It May Concern,

This letter is in support of legislation proposed for the City of San Francisco that would ban the release of commercially-raised butterflies. The North American Butterfly Association (NABA), the largest group of people focused on North American butterflies, has worked for years to stop this senseless and destructive activity. Essentially all scientists and naturalists (park rangers, etc.) oppose this activity. There are three broad reasons why dumping farmed butterflies into the environment should be prohibited.

1. Harm to wild butterflies.

It has been demonstrated with other organisms (such as salmon) that diseases that are rife in farmed animals spread to wild populations.

It has also been demonstrated by scientific research that the release of farmed organisms into the environment results in interbreeding with wild populations and that this interbreeding lowers the genetic fitness of the wild populations.

Regarding butterflies specifically, it has been shown (by Dr. Sonia Altizer of the University of Georgia, among others) that commercially raised Monarchs carry a wide range of diseases.

Lastly, allowing the sale of butterflies creates a commercial market for butterflies. Individual Monarchs sell for about \$10 each. There have already been reports of individuals capturing Monarchs at the California overwintering sites to sell to the public.

2. Interference with scientific studies.

NABA, and others, monitor wild butterfly populations to determine whether they are increasing or decreasing. Butterflies are important indicators of the health of the environment. For example, recent range changes of many butterfly species was one of the first signals of the reality of global warming. Dumping farmed butterflies into the environment makes it impossible for scientists to know if the butterflies being seen at various locations are occurring there naturally or have been artificially released into these locations.

3. Butterflies are living animals -- not props for a human circus.

The farmed butterflies that are sent by commercial breeders to well-meaning but naive people, for use at events such as weddings, funerals or corporate meetings, are abused. The adult butterflies are placed in glassine envelopes and shipped, sometimes a very long distance, to customers. When they arrive, the butterflies are often dead or dying (see comments from people present at these events at <http://www.naba.org/readwed.html>).

For all of these reasons, we urge you to support the legislation proposed for San Francisco that would ban the release of commercially raised butterflies into the environment.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Glassberg, Ph.D.

President: Jeffrey Glassberg; Vice-president: James Springer; Secretary/Treasurer: Jane Vicroy Scott
Directors: Fred Heath, Yvonne Homeyer, Ann James, Dennis Olle, Robert Robbins, Patricia Sutton,
& the aforementioned officers

September 19, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

The Bay Nature Institute is a Bay Area-based nonprofit organization that promotes the exploration, celebration, and stewardship of the natural world of the San Francisco Bay Area. I am writing to you now to support the proposed legislation banning the release of commercially raised butterflies in the City and County of San Francisco.

While we understand that the intentions of those who purchase and release commercially raised butterflies may be to add a “natural” touch to important events and celebrations, the reality is that such releases can have a number of harmful impacts on our wild butterfly populations, including on species—such as monarch butterflies—that are already facing a number of serious challenges from human practices resulting in reduced habitat and food sources.

We know that farmed populations of any animal may carry disease organisms that wild populations have not developed an immunity to. In addition, interbreeding between farmed and wild populations may reduce the genetic fitness of butterflies that have evolved to survive in the wild. There is also an element of cruelty involved in packaging living butterflies in cages or envelopes for shipment, often over long distances.

We would much rather that the residents of San Francisco and the Bay Area learn to appreciate the beauty and diversity of observing our region’s native butterflies in their natural habitats (including on the streets of downtown San Francisco!) than see these amazing animals as objects for our entertainment.

Thank you for considering this legislation that would ban the sale and release of commercially raised butterflies in San Francisco.

Sincerely,

David Loeb, Executive Director

