

CNPS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
Chapter Council

FROM: Amanda Jorgenson, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, December - February, 2008

DATE: February 22, 2008

This is brief summary of the main activities that we have carried out during this reporting period. I would like to thank each and every member of our staff (paid and unpaid) who have worked with me to make all of this work possible. I think we have an excellent team!

CNPS PROGRAMS

Conservation Program

Search for a Conservation Program Director

We advertised the job description for two months (Dec-Jan) and conducted all interviews in February. The selection committee was integrated by Sue Britting, Ilene Anderson, David Chipping, Vern Goehring, Carol Witham, and me. On February 21, we interviewed one of the candidates for a second time to better assess his leadership skills, his ability to work with people, as well as his approach to policy development and advocacy. We are in the process of checking his personal and professional references and hope to make him and offer next week. If everything works out, the Board of Directors and the Chapter Council may be able to meet him in person at the next Chapter Council meeting.

Invasive Exotics Working Group

During the last few months members of the Invasive Exotics Working Group (Robert Case, Don Mayall and Jake Sigg) participated in meetings and conference calls for the planning of National Invasive Weeds Awareness Week, February 24-29 in Washington DC and Invasive Weeds Day at the Capitol, in Sacramento, March 12th. In addition members of the committee delivered five PowerPoint presentations on and related to invasive plants to:

- the natural sciences guild docents of the Oakland Museum
- the Contra Costa County Fish and Wildlife Committee
- the Bay Area Landscape Supervisors Forum
- the Friends of Marsh Creek
- the East Bay Regional Parks Botanic Garden Friends

They also attended two planning sessions of the Iron Horse Trail interpretive Kiosk group.

CNPS Legislative Program

The Legislative Program continued to review, identify, and track legislation that affected native plants and conservation and to collaborate with other environmental organizations (such as Green California). A few highlights are mentioned below.

The main focus during this time frame centered on the 2007 Southern California wild fires. With the assistance from Alison Shilling and other CNPS members, a letter and report was prepared for the chairs and committee members on the Joint Legislative Committee on Emergency Services and Homeland Security, the Secretary of the Resources Agency, the Director of the California Department of Forestry, and the Department of Fish and Game Director. The purpose of the report is to highlight the current scientific literature and understanding of the relationship between plants and fire and to make recommendations to minimize human, structural, and natural resources destruction for the next wild fire season. Katie Koning remains in contact with Senator Kehoe's office regarding the scheduling of a fire hearing.

In addition, an important bill Vern Goehring and Katie Koning focused on was AB 1457 (Huffman). AB 1457 seeks to protect and preserve California's state parks and ensure their availability for future generation. CNPS supported two amendments to the bill including one that ensures specific consideration be given if the proposed San Onofre toll road is necessary to address a significant public health and safety concern posed by an existing road. Katie Koning attended the January 15, 2008 hearing and testified that CNPS supports the bill. AB 1457 faced fierce opposition at the hearing and subsequently stalled in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. (Note: On February 6, 2008, the California Coastal Commission voted against the building of the toll road.)

Another highlight entailed the coordination of the presentation of the 2007 Legislator of the Year Award to Assemblymember Wolk. Vern Goehring and Amanda Jorgenson will present Ms. Wolk the award at the Sacramento CNPS Chapter meeting on March 12, 2008.

Finally, both Vern and Katie continue to participate on conference calls and/or attend meetings with Green California. In addition, we continue to monitor newly introduced legislation to identify bills of interest to CNPS.

Rare Plant Program

Nick Jensen began work as the new Rare Plant Botanist in early December and received training from Kristi Lazar and Roxanne Bittman. Nick spent much of December and January processing a large backlog of California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB) data from September through December 2007. Review of CNDDDB data resulted in hundreds of changes to the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory. Most of the changes were updates to the threats, phenology, elevation ranges, and habitats of hundreds of plants.

Three plants, *Astragalus kentrophyta* var. *ungulatus* (List 2), *Frangula purshiana* ssp. *ultramafica* (List 1B), and *Brodiaea santarosae* (List 3) were added to the CNPS Inventory after going through the rare plant review process. Three more plants, *Sisyrinchium longipes*, *Carex klamathensis*, and *Rhamnus alnifolia* will likely be added to the CNPS Inventory early in March.

Nick has continued to work on planning the Rare Plant Session of the 2009 Conference, and is now collaborating with Pat McIntyre, a graduate student at UC Davis and former Rare Plant Program volunteer, as the co-chair of the session.

Nick gave a talk about the CNPS Rare Plant Program to the annual meeting of US Forest Service Botanists on February 27. He will also give a talk on the use of the CNPS Inventory, CNDDDB, and BIOS at the March Chapter Council Meeting.

Vegetation Program

Chapter and Public Workshops

Jennifer co-taught a taxonomy class with Carol Witham focusing on vernal pool rare plants of northern California after the Northern California Botanist Annual Conference in Chico. Twenty people signed up for this class from various professions. Jennifer and Todd Keeler-Wolf have continued working with Michael Barbour and Ayzik Solomeshch on a new vernal pool classification workshop.

Donna, Josie, and Julie are providing a chapter vegetation sampling session at Fort Ord for three days in late February with Bruce Delgado and Brett Hall supporting the effort. A number of BLM staff and CNPS volunteers are assisting in this effort to survey the unique maritime chaparral vegetation at Fort Ord.

Grasslands Project (Donation funded)

Jennifer made additional contacts with external researchers to share their existing grassland data. Nelmy Narvaez completed a vegetation program internship after assisting in the reformatting of data received from researchers. Andrew Georgeades, a new project lead, entered hardcopy grassland data into the CVIS database system. Theresa Johnson, our second new project lead, finalized and compiled all data received from researchers to date. Jennifer, Julie, Donna, Melissa, and Amanda met to identify future funding sources to move the grassland initiative forward. Jennifer submitted an abstract to the California Native Grasslands Association 2008 Annual Conference in order to promote collaboration with other agencies and organizations.

Lassen Foothills Project in Tehama County (Grant Funded)

Jennifer completed assessing the accuracy of the Lassen Foothills vegetation map through an iterative process with the mapping subcontractor, AIS. CNPS shared our 450 vegetation surveys with Tehama Co. Resource Conservation District to assist in their development of a watershed assessment and management plan for eastern Tehama Co. The final vegetation map shapefile and attributes were sent to The Nature Conservancy for fire modeling and further analyses.

Manual of California Vegetation (MCV)

Andrew developed a style guide and, with the assistance of Theresa, reformatted approximately 200 'life history' and 'fire characteristics' information tables that will be included in the updated Manual of California Vegetation. Andrew has established, contacted and transferred files to a peer reviewer, Neil Sugihara, for the continued refinement of the information tables. He also has been researching methods of compiling spatial data for MCV vegetation distributions in a compact, concise format. Theresa researched and inputted new literature references into the MCV EndNote library system.

Julie, John Sawyer, and Todd Keeler-Wolf continued working on various aspects of the MCV book revision. We reviewed hundreds of vegetation descriptions that all three co-authors have written; we reviewed the information tables associated with descriptions; and we have written or reviewed introductory chapters of the book. We also met with Amanda Jorgenson, Dore Brown, Holly Forbes, and Steve Hartman to discuss the next steps for publishing the book later this year.

Marin County Open Space District (OSD) Workshop

The entire vegetation staff participated in a training held for Marin County OSD in early February. CNPS was contracted to teach rapid assessment and relevé methods to County staff. Their staff will be performing an accuracy assessment and update of their vegetation map this spring.

Rare Vegetation / Natural Communities Project

Donna is collaborating with several contributors to draft a white paper outlining the importance of rare plant communities, strategies for identifying and mapping them, and needs for their conservation. Donna coordinated four meetings during this quarter to provide an overview on the topic and to receive feedback. Meetings were held with interested agency staff, academics, chapters, and consultants to advance discussions on approaches to document and conserve rare plant communities at state and local levels. A smaller, advisory committee has now emerged to start developing a plan of action for future efforts.

Donna, Julie, and Todd met with Grey Hayes and Eric VanDyke to establish standards for identifying and mapping maritime chaparral. We also talked and met with Diane Ikeda and the USFS about assessment of rare fen vegetation.

San Joaquin Valley (SJV) and Sierra Nevada Foothills (SNF) Projects

Jennifer and Julie worked with Department of Fish and Game (DFG) staff to develop a new sole source contract for vegetation projects in the SJV and SNF regions. The contract will fund an alliance-level vegetation map of the northern SNF, and it will fund a baseline inventory of vegetation in the SJV and adjacent southern SNF and Carrizo Plains. CNPS plans to collaborate with DFG and Aerial Information Systems on this project with a two-million dollar budget and detailed scope of work developed.

Other Vegetation Program Details

We hired two new temporary staff this quarter, Andrew Georgeades and Theresa Johnson, who have focused their work on the MCV and grassland initiatives. With new funding for projects, we plan to continue their employment, and we are conducting interviews to hire additional field staff for the SJV/SNF projects.

Staff attended various conferences, meetings, and trainings this quarter, including the Northern California Botanists Conference, Microsoft Access training, and the USFS annual botany meeting. Staff also provided information to counties and consultants for initiating new vegetation mapping projects.

Horticulture Program

Peigi Duvall has informed me that due to her numerous work and family commitments; she will not be able to continue as Director of the Horticulture Program. Lucky for us, Peigi will continue to work with the Horticulture Committee. Susan Libonati, Shata Chapter, has graciously accepted to be the next Director of the program. Peigi, Susan, I will coordinate to ensure Susan's smooth transition into the program.

Peigi has also been coordinating with Bay Area chapters to have a CNPS booth at the upcoming San Francisco Flower & Garden Show.

We run out of the 50,000 copies of the Gardening with Natives Brochure. Thanks to a very generous donation from Ambassador Lane and his wife, we were able to print 45,000 more copies just in time for the plant sales.

We signed an agreement with Calflora to share inventory data. Nick, Roy, and I will meet in March to coordinate the transfer of information.

Education Program

Josie Crawford, Training Coordinator, was busy preparing for the first half year of workshops for 2008. To date we have planned the following workshops:

- Rare Plants of San Diego County, taught by Fred Roberts and Michelle Balk
- Vegetation Rapid Assessment taught by Todd Keeler-Wolf, Julie Evens, Donna Shorrock, and Jennifer Buck
- Vernal Pool Plant Taxonomy, taught by Carol Witham, Jennifer Buck, Ellen Dean, and Rob Preston
- Vernal Pool Plant Communities, taught by Michael Barbour, Ayzik Solomesheh, Stephen Rae, with assistance by Carol Witham, and Jennifer Buck
- Identification, Ecology, and Management of the Most Invasive Plants of California's Wildlands, taught by Joe DiTomaso, Guy Kyser, and Jacob Barney
- Wetland Plants of the Sacramento Valley Region, taught by Virginia Dains, Robert Holland, and Jeff Hart
- Identification and Ecology of Carex, taught by Kerry Heise, Geri Hulse-Stephens, Peter Warner. Several more workshops are in the pipeline for summer and fall of 2008.

CNPS had a booth at the Northern California Botanists Symposium Jan 14-15 where we promoted the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference, the workshop program, and CNPS publications. We offered two workshops following the symposium: Rare Plants of Northern California Vernal Pools, taught by Carol Witham and Jennifer Buck, and Conducting Rare Plant Assessments, taught by John Dittes. Both were very well received.

CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference: Strategies and Solutions

In addition to developing new workshops, the Education Program has been very actively working on the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference. Josie Crawford is the understudy to the conference planner, Cynthia Perrine, the Arrangements committee co-chair, and serves on the Workshop Committee with Jim Nelson. We have been busy filling the sixteen committees in the Arrangements Committee, participating in weekly Executive Committee meetings, and planning workshops for the conference.

I have been directly involved in recruiting keynote speakers as well as fundraising. I also developed the content for the web page.

Publications

I signed a working agreement with Heyday Books to co-publish books of common interest. Malcolm Margolin, Heyday Executive Director, Holly Forbes, and I are exploring a few ideas for a new book.

Holly Forbes, Dore Brown (new publications co-advisor), Steve Hartman, Julie Evens, Todd Keeler Wolf and I met to discuss the timeline for the publication of the MCV. Dore Brown is in the process of getting quotes and schedules from designers, production services, and printers. We hope to have the book printed in time for the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference.

The funding needed for the MCV has been obtained (\$75,000). I am trying to get additional funding from Caltrans and other institutions to support data basing.

ADMINISTRATION, FINANCE, AND DEVELOPMENT

Finance and Administration

FY 2008-09 CNPS Budget Submission

2009 Conservation Conference budget was drafted and incorporated into the 2008-09 draft budget. We worked with Vegetation Program staff to review several versions of a large budget for a multi-year Sole Source contract with the Department of Fish and Game. Year one of the proposed DFG contract was incorporated into the 2008-09 draft budget.

The 2008-09 Draft Budget was sent to the Board on January 25, 2008 and approved at the Board meeting on February 2, 2008. The approved budget will be revisited/reviewed at the June 2008 Board meeting.

Tax Returns

The tax returns for the year ending March 31, 2007 were filed on February 12, 2008. We are working to have the tax returns of the year ending March 31, 2008 and the audited financial statements for the years 2006-2007 and 2007-2008, 2008 completed by May 31, 2008. Completing the financial statements and tax returns at the close of the fiscal year avoids the filing of extensions and the information is more timely and relevant. It is also easier to get on the auditors schedule in May since it is not their prime season. **Please note:** Several things will need to occur in order for the audit and tax returns to be completed in May:

- 1) State Office will need to be current on all monthly reporting and reconciliations
- 2) Physical inventory of State Office books and posters will need to be taken on March 31, 2008
- 3) Chapter Ending Inventory reports for March 31, 2008 will need to be submitted by April 14, 2008
- 4) Annual Chapter Statement of Receipts and Expenditures will need to be completed by each chapter and submitted by April 21, 2008
- 5) Quarterly Sales Tax Reports must be current for every chapter

Quarterly Sales Tax

The Quarterly Sales Tax report was filed on time by January 31, 2008, but an amended return will be necessary after the late Chapter Sales Tax reports are received. It is important for Chapter Sales Tax reports to be submitted on time every quarter. The Board of Equalization charges a 10% penalty plus 1% per month for late reports.

CNPS Directory

Larry Levine has graciously accepted my request for support and has worked diligently to update the CNPS Directory. He and Stacey have been coordinating to make sure we have the directory ready to be distributed at the Chapter Council meeting.

Development

Donor Recognition: Each year, CNPS honors its Fellows and Circle donors at our annual banquet held in Berkeley. On December 8th, we were able to present a number of certificates to members of both our Legacy and Donor Circles and to publicly acknowledge their generosity to CNPS.

Appeals: In response to our annual major donor appeal letter (mailed in November 2007 to approximately 375 donors), we received a total of \$117,000, some of which was earmarked for specific programs or projects. For example, one gift of \$5,000 was used to reprint our "Gardening with California Native Plants" brochure. We have just completed and mailed an update letter to major donors on the hiring of our new conservation director. We have begun to work on a new spring and lapsed-member direct appeals that will be sent in April.

Planned Giving: We received a \$50,000 bequest from longtime CNPS member Natalie Hopkins to initiate the Natalie Hopkins Education Fund to support plant science research by women. We are in the process of adding planned giving option information to the CNPS website.

Foundation Funding: We received a grant of \$30,000 from the Marisla Foundation in January 2008.

Conference Funding: We have submitted 15 requests for sponsorship of the CNPS 2009 conference as well as 7 applications/letters of intent for conference funding to foundations and corporations. BLM, USFS, DFG, and CDFA have all agreed to sponsor the conference.

We will dedicate a good part of the next couple of months to ensure the necessary funding for the conference.

Book Sales: Response to the Fall Sales flyer was very positive. Focusing the publications flyer on only new titles reinvigorated interest in what other products that CNPS carries for sale. We received orders from people and companies that told us, “We’re so excited you finally got a selection to choose from,” because they have become accustomed to seeing the same catalog format with essentially the same items for the past few years.

Membership: We are proud to announce the CNPS membership postcard. The postcard is a one-two punch: it gives notice and thanks to members for their membership in CNPS and includes a membership ID card for members to prove current membership at chapter events and participating businesses that provide discounts to CNPS members. The postcard saves paper that would otherwise be used in sending our traditional thank you letters, not to mention postage costs and staff time. New CNPS members will also be receiving a new item in their new member packet: coupons to receive discounts on subscriptions to *Bay Nature* and *Pacific Horticulture*. Current CNPS members, of course, will be able to participate in this great discount opportunity as well, and will be able to learn of additional CNPS membership benefits on a new web page on our web site, cnps.org/membership, as well as through notices in *The CNPS Bulletin* and *Fremontia*.

The postcard was an in-house design production!! Arvind, Stacey and I designed it. The photo was taken by Stacey Flowerdew.

The Web page *join-now* button has been established. New and renewing members can register online more easily.

Arvind, in collaboration other volunteers have been working to increase membership benefits (i.e., special discounts for Pacific Horticulture, and BayNature Magazines and nurseries). I have signed two separate memorandums of understanding with Pacific Horticulture Foundation and Baynature Institute to formalize our collaboration with these prestigious institutions to promote membership.

Annual report. I prepared the Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2006-2007 which will be published with the next issue of the CNPS Bulletin.

CNPS Meetings: I conducted monthly general staff meetings (last Thursday of every month) and weekly office staff meeting (Monday mornings). I also conducted regular weekly teleconference meetings with the BOD Executive Committee (every Monday) and the CNPS Conference Executive Committee (every Thursday).

The Conference Executive Committee also held two in person meetings (Jan 18 and Feb. 19, Sacramento). We also met in person with the CNPS Conference Arrangements Committee (Feb 19, Sacramento). I also met over the phone with Arvind Kumar, Peigi Duvall and other CNPS volunteer staff. I met with Melissa, Sandy McCoy, Sue Britting, Cari Porter, and Arvind to develop a fundraising work plan for this fiscal year.

I also attended three Sacramento Valley Chapter monthly meetings.

Staff Changes: Melissa Cirone accepted a job with the Sacramento Opera. She received a very good offer. I hope she can continue her affiliation with CNPS as a development advisor.

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

I have represented CNPS at various meetings:

- The 2008 Annual Environmental Symposium. Planning Conservation League Symposium (Sacramento)
- California League of Conservation Voters (Saturday, January 12, Sacramento)
- CESH (California Endangered Species Alliance), monthly teleconference calls
- Coordination meetings with UC Merced, CESH, and US FWS
- Northern California Botanists Second Annual Symposium (Jan 14-16, Chico)
- Third Annual Symposium, California Rangeland Coalition (Jan. 22, Sacramento)
- Pacific Horticulture Institute (Jan. 11, Lafayette)
- Baynature Institute (Feb. 22, Berkeley)
- Met briefly with Diane Elam, USFWS to follow up on a request for support for the Conference.