

California Native Plant Society

Quarterly Executive Director Report

September 11-12, 2010



Author: Executive Director and Program Staff

Internal Report

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Communications Plan

Since early 2009 and the formation of the CNPS Marketing Committee, there has been discussion about the need to create a communications plan for CNPS to guide us in creating and executing all the different types of communications we need to support the CNPS vision, mission and goals. While we have already discussed and embarked on the development of a new logo and more consistent branding approach, what really provides the framework for these tools is a solid communications plan. After reading that last sentence, you are probably asking the same question I asked initially, because even having previously worked for a large non-profit organization and a few very large corporations, I had not personally ever seen a good communications plan. What is it for, and why is it important to have one?

In researching the mechanics of communication plans on the web, I found an introduction for one template that explained the purpose of a communications plan as follows:

The purpose of a strategic communications plan is to integrate all the organization's programs, public education and advocacy efforts. By planning a long-term strategy for your efforts, you will be positioned to be more proactive and strategic, rather than consistently reacting to the existing environment. The strategic plan will help you deploy resources more effectively and strategically by highlighting synergies and shared opportunities in your various programs and work areas.

The creation and adoption of a strategic communications plan represents a significant step for any organization. For many organizations, the adoption of such a plan represents a cultural shift toward communications and a clear recognition that all the organization's efforts have a communications element. Public education, grassroots organizing, research, public advocacy, direct service and even fundraising are all, at their core, communications tasks vital to the health and success of a nonprofit organization.¹

I'm sure we would all agree that CNPS is a champion in the area of reaction-response communication. Something happens that impacts rare plants, and we react with communication at either the state or the chapter level. Something changes internally that we are uncomfortable with, and we react with communication. All of this happens very fast and is very free flowing – somewhat organic if you will. Yet does such an ad hoc process always end up communicating the complete, intended message to all of the people that need to know it? Do we always say what we really mean in language clear enough for all the audiences understand what we're saying and its importance? Does the public hear a consistent message from all areas of our organization? Or is it a different message when delivered by one chapter or another? Is the communication between the chapters and the state, and vice versa, as effective as it could be?

Identifying audiences, messages, tools, and strategies for communication – the heart of a communications plan - can help us address many of these questions and challenges with solutions. Developing template messaging that is consistent with our mission and vision, and identifying the appropriate audiences for various forms of communication can help us be more consistent and deliberate in our external messaging. It can also greatly improve the efficiency (speed) of our response to a variety of potential events if we have previously taken the time to think about our various audiences and how we can best reach them through various forms of media.

So with the idea of a much more strategic communication outcome in mind, the Marketing Committee has been working on developing a Communications Plan for CNPS. The document is comprehensive and dense. It starts at Mission, Vision, and Goals, then identifies and describes our internal and external audiences, and our desired communication outcomes. It then summarizes the key points CNPS wants to convey in all of its public messaging, and provides a long and short narrative template that describes CNPS to the public. Secondary messages are also identified. The Methods and Tools section identifies all of the forms of communication used by CNPS, the intended audience and

¹ Independent Media Institute. *The SPIN Project* (2005). Accessed online August 31st, 2010: <https://spinproject.rdsecure.org/downloads/SCPTemplate.pdf>

purpose for each, and frequency of use. Finally, the concluding section identifies strategies by which CNPS can achieve its mission/vision/goals through various strategic imperatives (projects and tasks that when completed, will help us achieve our mission/vision/goals).

As this document comes out of Committee review toward the end of the month, we will make the committee's final draft available to Chapter Council for review and comment. We will present the primary concepts to Chapter Council for feedback in December, and the Board of Directors will evaluate the final draft for approval in its February 2011 meeting.

CNPS Rare Plant Ranks – Name Change

As some of you have already heard, Department of Fish and Game (DFG) changed the name of the "CNPS Ranks" to "California Rare Plant Rank" in May of this year. This name change was the result of discussions between DFG leadership, myself, and our former Rare Plant Program Director Nick Jensen that began when DFG approached us in late August of 2009 with a request to change the name to something that more accurately represented the collaborative process we currently use to assign rare plant ranks in California today. As these discussions took place over the course of several months, the CNPS Executive Committee and the CNPS Board were kept up to date on the process and thoroughly debated all concerns.

The primary reasons for the name change were two-fold. First, since CNPS provided DFG with its existing body of work on the Rare Plant Inventory back in about 1980, the system of evaluating and determining the rare plant ranks for the state of California had evolved since that time into a highly collaborative process coordinated by DFG and CNPS, with involvement and comment from taxonomic experts across the state (Rare Plant Status Review Groups and Forum). At present, the Rare Plant Status Review Groups consist of about 300 botanical specialists from a wide variety of organizations. Although the name on the actual ranks has remained CNPS "Ranks" or "Lists", this no longer accurately reflects CNPS's role in the rank process – it is not something we are solely responsible for.

Secondly, the name "CNPS Lists" or "CNPS Ranks" gives outsiders the false impression that CNPS has excessive influence on the regulatory process. This makes it more difficult for DFG and other agencies who have embraced the current ranking system for assessing environmental impacts of proposed projects on native flora to defend the list – both to agency leadership and the public.

Over the course of these several months, CNPS and DFG discussed the possibility of co-branding the list to something like "DFG/CNPS Ranks," but over time came to realize that this would be confusing to those using the list and would also give the false impression that DFG/CNPS solely assigned the ranks. After a series of discussions on the CNPS Board, and with DFG staff, we finally agreed on the more generic name of "California Rare Plant Ranks" – or the acronym "CRPR." This change is currently being implemented on the DFG website, and will be implemented on the CNPS website with the release of the new version of the Online Inventory in the next few weeks. **Let me emphasize here that the name change to CRPR itself in no way changes anything about the actual process of rare plant review or rank assignment. The same committee of experts from many organizations in addition to DFG and CNPS still review each change and ultimately assign the rankings.**

We will be continuing to work with DFG leadership and staff to ensure that CNPS's role in coordinating the rank assignments and our history of developing the need and original data for today's rare plant inventory are prominently referenced in all literature about the ranks and the rank assignment process on the DFG website.

State Website – Home Page Update

If you have not checked out the home page of the CNPS website recently, please be sure to go there frequently to find out what's going on in the State programs. You may even want to bookmark it as your home page! In July, we released an update to the home page with a completely re-designed layout that includes a section on latest news and activities. We plan to update these links every month so that visitors to the website can follow current projects. At some point in

the future and as we (hopefully) obtain funding for communications and media staff, this section could evolve to include a press link or we may add a moving press link at the top of the page.

Photo credits for the center section go primarily to Nick Jensen and Amber Swanson. We will want to change these photos out regularly too, so be sure to send me your latest and greatest gorgeous flower or landscape photos if you would like them to be displayed on the website.

FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION – authored by Cari Porter

Fiscal Year End Reporting

The tax returns for the year ending March 31, 2009 were filed on February 16, 2010. Two extensions were filed (the maximum allowed) before we were able to complete the returns. Since we prepare the tax returns and conduct the audit at the same time, our audited financial statements are prepared almost a year after the fiscal year end. Most foundations require that an audited financial statement be provided as part of the application. In order to continue to receive grant funding and government contracts we need to be able to provide current audited financial statements.

We have now completed another fiscal year and are scheduled to begin the audit and tax returns on September 27, 2010. In order to process the tax returns we need each chapter's Ending Inventory report for March 31, 2010, and the Annual Chapter Statement of Receipts and Expenditures. The forms were sent to the Chapter Treasurers in March and were due April 21, 2010. As of August 31, 2010 only 28 chapters submitted the Annual Statement of Receipts and Expenditures and only 24 chapters submitted the Ending Inventory report. In order to complete the audit and file the tax returns without multiple extensions, it is important for reports to be submitted ASAP.

Volunteer treasurers are not expected to be financial experts and can contact the State Board Treasurer or the Finance and Administration Manager if there are any questions or concerns. We appreciate the Chapter Treasurer's efforts and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the reporting process.

Chapter Sales Tax Reporting

CNPS is now required to file all Sales Tax Reports with the Board of Equalization (BOE) electronically. With e-filing, a full street address needs to be entered for each location before moving to the next line. If even just one zip code is missing the report cannot be submitted. The full address is needed by the State Board of Equalization since sales tax is distributed to different cities, counties and special districts depending on the location of where the sales took place. The chapters can assist in making this process easier by including the full street address (no PO Boxes), tax rate, total sales, and County for each location where sales took place.

All forms are emailed to Chapter Treasurers. The financial reporting forms and sales tax forms can also be found on the Admin page of the CNPS website at all times. Since most of the forms and notices are sent via email, it is important that we have a current email address at all times. Please notify the state office of any change to your contact information and note any chapter positions held so that group email lists can be updated. Unfortunately, we have no way of automatically knowing if the email you are using is new.

With 33 chapters and many having sales in multiple districts, there is a significant amount of data to enter on the consolidated sales tax report. Individual location addresses must be entered and individual district taxes must be calculated or each chapter and entered into the consolidated report. It is important for complete reports to be submitted on the date requested (21 days after quarter end - April 21, July 21, October 21 and January 21) to give our administrative staff the time necessary to enter and consolidate the data before the final report is due to BOE.

Also, please verify the sales tax rate of the location before the sales take place. There can be several different tax rates within one county. If you are unsure of a tax rate please email cporter@cnps.org or call me at 916-447-2677 x 203 and I can provide the information.

General Liability Insurance

With the fall plant sales season approaching, I want to remind chapters that all of the insurance certificate applications are available on the CNPS website. If the chapter has an event (plant sales, meeting, etc.) and needs a certificate, complete the CNPS Certificate/Additional Insured Form and return to the state office. Please allow at least a couple of weeks for processing.

Separate Special Event Coverage is necessary for all events where attendance will be over 500 (or an activity not covered under the basic policy, such as races and festivals). The chapter will need to complete a CNPS Special Event Coverage Form in addition to the CNPS Certificate/Additional Insured Form. Special event coverage does incur a fee and takes longer to process, so please submit the application as soon as your even is scheduled.

DEVELOPMENT – Tara Hansen

Fund Development Committee

The Fund Development Committee met on August 18th to review this year's results to date and the fundraising objectives for the remainder of the year. This Committee has been very active this year, with Committee members Brian LeNeve, Ellen Dean, and Chair Sandy McCoy chipping in help to write thank you notes to major donors; Allison Shilling assisting with call backs on the Horticulture Database appeal; Ellen Dean coming in to the office to help with callbacks to agencies solicited for helping to fund the Vegetation Program's database upgrade; and Sandy McCoy's help with developing the first drafts of both our spring and fall appeals. Mary Francis Kelly Poe and Arvind Kumar, who are on the Fund Development Committee but also co-chair the Membership Committee, also helped (in addition to a couple of Membership Committee members) review the Comeback Appeal we sent to significantly lapsed members over the summer. I have greatly appreciated their support - particularly critical now that we no longer have a full time Development Program Director on staff.

Grants and Bequests

As some of you may or may not have heard, Sandy McCoy has agreed to help support the Development program at the state office by researching potential foundation matches for those programs that have not obtained foundation funding in the past. As demands for program services have increased without a corresponding increase in general funding, this work is critical to CNPS and we feel fortunate to have someone with Sandy's experience and long standing knowledge of CNPS to help support it.

The Vegetation program has been receiving grant and contract funding to support its work for several years. Julie Evens and her staff do most of the work associated with developing and submitting requests for proposals and grant proposals. Josie Crawford has recently begun applying for grant funds to support program initiatives such as the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt and the development of the education curriculum.

It is important to note that nearly all grants or state and federal contracts require a certain amount of organizational matching from other sources. This is why all of our programs – even those primarily supported through other source – must receive some substantial level of general funding to remain viable, and why increasing funding from general memberships and appeals is vital to the overall funding structure of the state office as we continue to grow these programs.

In addition to program/project specific grants, we receive an operations grant each year for \$30,000 from an organization that wishes to remain anonymous, and this year received an unsolicited general funds grant from Craigslist for \$25,000.

This summer, we also received a \$35,000 bequest from a Channel Islands member who had listed us in his estate plans. These funds were specifically designated for our conservation endowment, which provides for all of the interest earnings and up to 5% of the principle to be used toward conservation program expenses each year.

Marketing and Communications Subcommittee

The Marketing and Communications Subcommittee met for the first time this summer on Thursday, September 2nd to review the Communications Plan Draft (see ED section) and discuss communication and event planning around the new Native Plant Week resolution that just cleared the legislature this week. Members of the committee continue to provide guidance on communications and marketing topics, and Mike Ross was instrumental in providing direct guidance on the development of the initial communications plan draft currently being reviewed and evaluated by the rest of the committee. William Wayland, Mike Ross, and Sandy McCoy have all provided significant guidance and expertise on our developing marketing and outreach approach, identification of and messaging for target audiences, appeal messaging, and so on. We sincerely appreciate their guidance and professional experience.

COMMUNICATIONS & SOCIAL MEDIA – Tara Hansen

Facebook and Social Networking

In March, Stacey Flowerdew assumed the role of key administrator on the CNPS Facebook page and continues to update the new fan page weekly with announcements of weekend chapter events around the state. The fan page site has grown to include 1,594 fans and 168 monthly active users. The group site 2,189 very active members. Stacey is currently working with our webmaster Mark Naftzger to experiment with “cause” pages. These can be sent out by members of the fan page or the group page to alert members to a specific event, or raise money for a cause. They can not only be sent to members of our own fan page, but our fans can send them to all of their friends. The potential for outreach with this tool is significant. Over the next year we will continue to explore the possibilities for expanding social media outreach and making better use of these tools.

CNPS E-Newsletter

Subscribership of the e-Newsletter continues to increase with each monthly edition. In the last report, we reported a total of 1969 subscribers however this number included some smaller recipient lists in the database that do not actually get the newsletter. The actual number of current subscribers has increased from 1,719 in June, to 1,859 in August.

CONSERVATION PROGRAM – authored by Greg Suba

Desert Renewable Energy Projects

CNPS continues to track desert projects in California and engage in planning discussions with State and Federal agency staff and project applicants. The California Energy Commission (CEC) has issued preliminary decisions to certify two projects, the Ivanpah Solar Energy project and the Imperial Valley Solar project (near El Centro, CA). CNPS San Diego Chapter has been intervening on the Imperial Valley project. The CEC staff has recommended non-certification of a third project, the Ridgecrest Solar project (because of project impacts to the Mojave Ground Squirrel) and the applicant in this case has temporarily halted planning work. The Creosote Ring subgroup of the CNPS Bristlecone Chapter had been tracking the Ridgecrest project. Several other projects with rare plant population and natural community impacts similar to Ivanpah are still going through "fast-track" review.

The CEC will issue a final decision on the Ivanpah project's application for certification on September 15th. This will almost certainly be a decision to approve the project. The Imperial Valley Solar project's final decision will be issued later on September 29th.

Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

The DRECP's independent panel of scientists has delivered a draft report to State and Federal agencies that recommends how to balance the building of desert renewable energy projects with the conservation of sustainable desert ecosystems. The report, *Recommendations of Independent Science Advisors for the California Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan*, provides a foundation for conserving desert habitats while building renewable energy projects ranging 3,000 - 10,000 acres in size.

The report identifies gaps in existing data, and calls for the gathering and evaluation of additional data, including detailed vegetation maps, as soon as possible. The panel advocates for the siting of projects only in already disturbed areas - so that early projects can move forward while more complete information is being developed that can guide more difficult siting decisions in the plan over time.

To assist the DRECP process, CNPS gathered and prioritized information relevant to the conservation of intact natural vegetation communities and rare plant populations within the desert planning area, and provided it to DRECP science advisors. Much of our information was incorporated into the draft Report. We will continue to work to ensure that the final plan provides adequate protections for sensitive plant habitat and vegetation communities. The draft Science Report is available on the DRECP webpage at www.DRECP.org.

Army Corp of Engineers Levee Vegetation Policy

The US Army Corps of Engineers has had as a national policy a requirement to remove all woody vegetation from levees in order to obtain Corps levee certification, itself a key factor in a municipal agency's ability to obtain FEMA certification of levees. Having allowed local variances in policy implementation for years, the post-Katrina Corps is now enforcing their levee vegetation policy nationwide. The Corps insistence on policy compliance is in direct conflict with the current joint agreement between the California Departments of Water Resources and Fish & Game which recognizes the benefits of vegetation on levees. The City of Seattle, the State of Washington, and the Center for Biological Diversity have issued notices to sue the Corps because of this policy.

CNPS has joined with a coalition of environmental groups in opposition to the Corps' levee vegetation policy, and has begun to consult with local officials, and state and federal legislators to emphasize the potential destruction of much of the remaining Central Valley riparian habitat should this policy be implemented.

Chapter Conservation Calls

Greg held the first round of statewide Conservation Calls during two days in mid-June. A total of nine Chapters participated in the calls and shared issues of local concern. Greg provided a synopsis of statewide CNPS issues. Beginning on September 21, Greg will host monthly Chapter Conservation Calls from 10am-Noon on the 3rd Tuesday of each month.

CEQA Challenges (update provided by Vern Goehring):

Although several bills proposing challenges to the existing California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) statute were put to votes this year, no additional exemptions or changes weakening the existing law were passed. The last challenge, AB 1581, proposed a new CEQA exemption for retail businesses renovating and moving into existing buildings of up to 120,000 square feet. The bill was a "gut and amend" re-crafting of a previously passed Assembly bill just days before action in the Senate. The bill was pushed feverishly through committee and to a floor vote in the final days and hours before the close of the 2010 legislative session, and was ultimately shelved without an up or down Senate vote.

One CEQA bill was actually promoted by the many in the environmental community as a defense against the bad bills. SB 1456, coauthored and ultimately passed by Democrats and Republicans, incorporates certain provisions to expedite CEQA lawsuits, encourage mediation as an alternative, clarify who may bring lawsuits, and allow a defendant to petition the court to determine whether an action is frivolous prior to a trial. SB 1456's provisions all sunset in 2016 and will need to be reenacted to continue in effect.

More CEQA challenges are expected in the 2011/12 legislative session which begins in December, and of course measures doing mischief can always be added to a budget compromise, when that emerges from the Legislature.

Native Plant Week Resolution (ACR 173)

On August 27, the Native Plant Week Resolution passed the Senate floor by a vote of 24-11 with 4 members not-voting. This act officially establishes the third week in April each year as California Native Plant Week, starting on April 17-23, 2011.

Vern Goehring and Joshua Stark worked closely with Assemblywoman Noreen Evans and her staff to move this resolution forward. Several volunteers around the Society (particularly on the Horticulture Committee) have provided support and helped provide information needed to address questions that have come up about some of the language in the bill.

EDUCATION PROGRAM –authored by Josie Crawford

The Stewardship and Education Committee

The Stewardship and Education Committee has met twice over the summer to review and offer feedback on the initial draft of the curriculum we have been developing to help get kids outdoors and observing and drawing plants and animals in nature. This fall, we plan to offer a working draft of the curriculum to a few teachers, group leaders, scout masters, and naturalists for review. Although much of this work has already been extensively field-tested, there are some new sections and arrangements of exercises that could benefit from review.

The new curriculum - *Opening the World through Journaling: Integrating art, science, and language arts* by John Muir Laws and Emily Breunig is specifically tailored for CNPS, and is geared primarily towards children age 8 and up (grades 3 through 7). By completing games and exercises throughout the curriculum, children learn to become keen observers of the natural world through drawing and writing. Later, they employ these skills to assemble a field guide, make treasure maps, and write short stories and poems. These journal activities tie directly into the State of California's science framework content standards as well as the visual and performing arts framework content standards.

CNPS is looking forward to making this wonderful work available for wide distribution in the fall and needs people to review the curriculum. If you or someone you know would be interested in helping us review the draft curriculum before the fall release date, please contact Josie Crawford at jcrawford@cnps.org. Once released, the curriculum will be available for free and easily downloading at <http://cnps.org/cnps/education/>.

Rare Plant Treasure Hunt

As many of you know, the CNPS Rare Plant Treasure Hunt teams botanists with amateurs to search for new and historic populations of rare plants across the state. The program has been enormously successful in reaching its objectives to get people outdoors and learning about and appreciating native plants, as well as updating the occurrence data on rare plants throughout the state. Through this program, participants can survey for rare plants in areas with little history of botanical exploration, relocate historic (not documented in over 20 years) rare plant occurrences, and/or update known occurrences of high-priority rare plants. Up-to-date information on rare plants and their habitats are needed to inform conservation actions and to aid planning efforts. The current status of many rare plant occurrences is unknown, and thousands have not been documented for decades.

The first season preliminary results for the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt are in and they are stupendous! Here are some of the numbers (and they aren't all in yet):

- Volunteers and partner organizations updated approximately 600 rare plant occurrences across the state.
- Of these, approximately 70% were new occurrences (previously unreported populations)
- Approximately 70% were California Ranked (CNPS List) 1B (Rare, threatened and endangered in California and elsewhere).
- An estimated 245 volunteers and partners contributed
- These volunteers gave over 2500 hours of time to the project!
- Over 20 chapters had participating volunteers.

From the education standpoint, we are happy to see people of all ages and backgrounds getting out and enjoying this activity. We have discovered that this project energizes children and teenagers, as well as adults. Children enjoy looking for the plants and finding them once they have the search image. Hiking on the way to locations, you can give them other things to discover, such as finding as many different types of trees or seed pods, as they can.

Some highlights of this year included:

- An Eagle Scout who did a Treasure Hunt project in the Mojave,
- Two teenage girls who had never been camping before, attended a training and will focus a CNPS internship on getting other teenagers out to look for plants (with an experienced trip-leader/botanist),
- A home school network hooked up with a team leader to go out on trips,
- A 20 yr old woman, who had never been on a hike before, participated.
- The San Gabriel Mountains and San Diego chapters contributing tremendous numbers of volunteer hours (429 hrs and 420 hrs respectively) and occurrence updates (27 and 24 respectively).
- The BLM, DFG, RSABG, National Parks and Parks Conservancy, East Bay Regional Parks, and Santa Clara County Parks are participating and contributing funds, staff time, office space, volunteer coordinators, volunteers, and enthusiasm.
- Journalists from the San Francisco Chronicle published a story on the program, and accompanied Heath Bartosh, Shannon Still, and Nick Jensen on a field outing (find a [link to the story](#) on our Home Page – links under Education for Latest News and Activities).

From the botanic point of view, we are thrilled to be adding so much important new occurrence information to our databases, and are pleased with the high quality of data coming in so far. We have been concentrating our efforts in areas where development pressure is high and resources for surveys are scarce when we can, such as in the eastern Mojave and Walker Ridge areas.

This year, we will offer trainings for team leaders to give people the tools and confidence to lead trips. If you are interested in attending a training or treasure hunt, see the workshops listed below or please let us know at treasurehunt@cnps.org. Go to <http://cnps.org/cnps/rareplants/treasurehunt/> to find more information.

The Treasure Hunt project was split into two sections to comply with the requirements of our funding sources. The Mojave Desert section was funded by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Service and we were able to hire Amber Swanson as the botanist/project coordinator. The Treasure Hunt for the remainder of the state was funded by a smaller grant from the CNPS Billisoly Fund, and we were able to hire Shannon Still as the project coordinator. Our partners in the project to date include Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden (RSABG), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and the Department of Fish and Game (DFG).

We are currently applying for funding for the 2011 season. We will happily accept donations from chapters as well as individuals and organizations to help fund the project. Simply send a check earmarked Rare Plant Treasure Hunt to our main office. We believe that citizen science projects like the Rare Plant Treasure Hunt serve dual purposes: (a) data collection: we are able to collect critical data on plants that would not otherwise be surveyed, and (b) education: by teaming up amateurs with botanists, we are able to get people outdoors and learning about rare plant ecology that might not otherwise be out there.

Plant Science Training Workshops

After a full spring and summer of training workshops, we are closing out the year with two more workshops this fall. The popular “Legends of the Fall,” a course on desert flora will be taught by Jim Andre and Tasha La Doux at the UC Granite Mountains Desert Research Center September 28th through the 30th. Jim Nelson will lead a course in environmental negotiations November 19-20 at UC Davis. This course emphasizes using principled negotiation approaches to achieve constructive environmental outcomes. The attendees are taught to recognize commonly encountered tactics and shown productive responses. Guest presenters will provide examples of successful negotiations – rumor has it that our own Carol Witham will be one of the guest presenters in this course.

CNPS 2012 Conservation Conference: Conserving and Restoring the Roots of California's Richness

The dates and location details for the 2012 Conference have now been finalized, and session topics are materializing quickly. The date/location details are:

Conference: January 12-14
Workshops: Jan 10-11
Public Day: January 14
Location: Town and Country Hotel, San Diego

Proposed session topics include the following: Climate Change, Planning Tools, Rare Plants, Transmontane Region, Central Coast and Valley, Baja and Cross-border Issues, Assessing and Mitigating project impacts, Land Management (includes fire and grazing), Science of Plant Restoration, Plant Science, Invasive Plant Programs, Equal Protection for Plants and Protecting CEQA, Vegetation Mapping and Science, Southern CA region, Northern CA region, Land Acquisition, Rare Communities, Edaphics/Locally Rare/ Hot spots, Horticultural Sciences, Conservation on Tribal Lands/Ethnobotany, and Education, Outreach, Citizen Science. These topics could still change or evolve as we get closer to the end of the year.

The preliminary planning schedule for the conference is:

- Call for abstracts and workshop proposals opens: Spring 2011
- Call for abstracts and workshop proposals closes: Summer 2011
- Registration and Preliminary Program sent out: Summer 2011
- Early Registration opens: Summer 2011
- Call for artwork and photographs opens: Early Autumn 2011
- Call for artwork and photographs closes: Mid- Autumn 2011

We are in serious need of volunteers for the Outreach Committee and Local (San Diego) Arrangements Committee. If you or someone you know in the San Diego area is willing to commit to help with the conference, please contact me at jcrawford@cnps.org for further information.

Up to date developments and opportunities to contribute will be posted on the conference webpage at <http://cnps.org/cnps/education/meetings.php>.

Plant Taxonomy Curriculum by Glen Keator

The teaching course for plant taxonomy and identification we talked about last quarter has been scheduled for Nov 20-21, 2010. Glen Keator will teach the course at the Regional Parks Botanic Garden in Tilden Park, Berkeley. This course is for people interested in **teaching** a plant taxonomy course at the junior college or extended education level. Potential teachers should be familiar with California flora and its plant families and have taken one or more semesters of Plant Taxonomy or Systematics. We will not be teaching plant taxonomy in this course but will teach how to teach a course using the syllabus provided by Dr. Glenn Keator. Please check the website for more details.

HORTICULTURE PROGRAM – Tara Hansen

Horticulture Web Development – Growing Natives Blog

We are working on building material for the Horticulture pages of the state website again, rounding out some of the existing topics and adding some new ones to a planned restructure for our navigation menus. Arvind Kumar is in the process of building a new events calendar that will soon replace the old Events Forum on the site, and allow for easier

posting of plant sales and other native gardening events. If you are able to work on any topic related to horticultural research, education, or landscaping (for professionals or homeowners) please contact Arvind Kumar or myself.

The horticulture blog (<http://grownatives.cnps.org>) is still lagging in posting activity and we would love to see some new authors who are able to contribute high quality posts to keep the interest level high. Laura Camp has been a champion at posting at least one quality article per month – and others have also contributed good information and postings to the blog. We would like to build traffic to the blog because additional traffic will help the site return more prominently in random web searches. Be sure to check it out on the state website when you can, and let us know if you are interested in becoming a guest author or contributing author. The article submission and posting requirements are listed on the right hand side of the blog in the links section (see right handle bar links: [Write for this CNPS blog](#)). Anyone can make comments to current postings.

Native Gardens – Quarterly e-newsletter

The quarterly e-newsletter edition that is focused on Native plant Gardening continues to be a huge success. The next Horticulture/Native Plant Gardening issue will be going out toward the end of September, and we are looking for submission of new articles and content. If you have recent horticulture related articles with state or regional implications that could be published in the State CNPS e-newsletter or posted to the website please get in touch with us. If you would like to submit an article for consideration, please forward it to the following e-mail address: cnps-horticulture-review-sub-committee@googlegroups.com.

Horticulture Database Project

After issuing an unsuccessful appeal to selected water agency contacts in March and April to help fund out the rest of the project, we elected to write a grant proposal. That proposal has been submitted and we are awaiting word on the results. We still need to raise approximately \$15-20,000 to complete the project.

On the planning side, Vince Scheidt followed through on his offer at the June meeting to help consolidate the extensive list of field attributes we had accumulated for the new database. The result of Vince's efforts will bring us to a significantly more simplified approach for collecting and organizing the initial data.

RARE PLANT – authored by Aaron Sims

Name Change for CNPS Ranks

Please review to the first section of the report, Executive Director News, for information about this important topic.

2009 Conservation Conference Proceedings (update provided by Holly Forbes, CNPS Press)

We continue to make progress toward the publication of the Proceedings of the 2009 Conservation Conference. We have received 55 manuscripts for inclusion in the Proceedings Publication. As of mid-May the initial technical editing is complete and copy editing is in progress at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. The final manuscripts went to an indexing service (Columbia Indexing) in late-June, and will go to press (the printer will be Commerce Printing) early next year. Gordon Leppig and Amanda Jorgenson completed a foreword for the publication. Bart O'Brien is working on the cover design with Beth Hansen-Winter. The estimated publication date is late-spring. Special thanks are in order to all of the individuals who continue to participate in this effort. Following Nick Jensen's leave in late-June, Holly Forbes has taken over the Proceeding process. For more information on the Proceedings please contact Holly (hforbes@berkeley.edu).

Rare Plant Inventory

The review of CNDDDB data has resulted in dozens of changes to CNPS Rare Plant Inventory data over the past three months. Most of the changes were updates to the threats, phenology, elevation ranges, and the habitat of dozens of taxa. During the late-March to late-August time period, the following rare plant status reviews were completed:

- Additions: 10 plants

For a complete list of changes please contact Aaron (asims@cnps.org)

Online Inventory Revision Project

Design and project requirements for the revision of the Online Inventory are complete and the project is fully-funded and underway. We have hired an independent consultant to do the bulk of programming and technical revision required for completion of the new Online Inventory. Initial design work has already been completed and the project is moving forward completely. We are nearing a project completion date and the new web application should be online and available for use this fall.

Funding for this project has been made available by a CNPS member, the Billisoly Bequest, and several botanical consulting firms. I sincerely thank all of our donors for making this revision a reality as well as those diligently reconstructing, reviewing, and implementing the project.

Rare Plant Treasure Hunt (Update provided by Shannon Still, Botanist/Project Coordinator)

The statewide Rare Plant Treasure Hunt has been a great success since its initiation in February of this year. We have had nearly 250 volunteers contribute over 2,000 hours in searching for and/or updating occurrences. Individuals or groups from 30 CNPS chapters have been involved in the project. This has included individuals from 11 NGOs and agencies and 35 groups or businesses. As of mid-August, approximately 318 updated or new occurrences have been submitted to CNDDDB, with an estimate of over 100 additional forms expected to be submitted in the coming months. So far, over 200 new occurrences have been documented, and nearly 100 previously-documented occurrences have been revisited. The Rare Plant Treasure Hunt will continue through late-summer and into next year so if you are still interested in becoming involved in the project then please contact us.

Greetings

Since my start with CNPS I have worked with Conservation Program Director, Greg Suba on impacts to rare plants from renewable energy projects across California. I will continue to coordinate with Greg on this task as well as future conservation projects to come.

As many of you know, Nick Jensen has left his position with CNPS to follow his dream of long-term travel and to pursue his educational goals. Prior to his effective leave date of July 1st, Nick took the opportunity to instruct and inform me on the various tasks pertaining to the position as a whole.

Although the time I spent with Nick was relatively short, he was a true mentor to me and I feel confident in saying that he will be missed by all. That being said, I consider this a truly fortunate position to hold, and look forward to working with CNPS Staff, members, and affiliates, as well as California's native flora in the years to come.

VEGETATION PROGRAM – authored by Julie Evens & Vegetation Program Staff

Chapter and Public Vegetation Workshops & Talks

Julie Evens and Deborah Stout taught a Vegetation Rapid Assessment workshop to around 15 participants in El Dorado County in early August. The training included the use of the CNPS plot-based relevé and stand-based rapid assessment techniques for depicting and mapping the diversity of vegetation in an area. Julie also participated in the California Native Grasslands Association annual conference this June, giving a talk on North Coastal Grasslands.

Manual of California Vegetation

Julie, Todd Keeler-Wolf, and John Sawyer wrote a brief *Fremontia* article addressing how fire characteristics have been incorporated into the new manual. We also drafted a new book concept to display picturesque photographs and brief written summaries of vegetation, as a coffee-table book companion to the Manual of California Vegetation, Second edition (MCV2). We are organizing and compiling photograph files, and we have written two template chapters (i.e., vegetation of the Klamath Mountains and Mojave Desert regions) for the new book. Also, we are working to identify new funding for the photo book and for an online version of the new manual.

Abigail Genelsa is also volunteering her time on this project. She entered the membership rules and elevation from the MCV2 book into our master database. She also is reviewing recent fire/vegetation research papers, so that we can add new information into a future online version of the book.

Grasslands Research Projects (Donation/Grant-funded)

Currently, we have been collecting grassland data to establish a more comprehensive vegetation classification of herbaceous communities in California. Betsy Harbert and Jennifer Buck collected over 80 new surveys on grazed lands with support from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) this spring, and we revisited 24 surveys to capture the summer variation in vegetation. We also created a pilot vegetation map for 10,000 acres of the Carrizo Plain National Monument to test the feasibility of mapping herbaceous plant communities at a fine-scale.

Also, we submitted a new proposal to the NRCS, under the California Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program, which was approved for \$65,791! This two-year grant is a continuation of our existing project to establish baseline knowledge about natural grasslands and invasive plants on grazing lands. This project will result in new ecological descriptions of grassland habitats in the southern Central Valley and Carrizo Plain. Jennifer wrote a brief article for the Bulletin with an update of the grassland initiative and next steps to utilize our new grant funds.

Carrizo Plain National Monument Project (Grant-funded)

CNPS vegetation staff (including Melinda Elster, Betsy Harbert, Rhiannon Korhummel, and Deborah Stout), collected over 380 vegetation surveys in the Carrizo Plain this year, and 45 of these were recorded as permanent long-term monitoring plots. These detailed field surveys will serve as a baseline for evaluating vegetation change with climate over time. We also conducted more than 830 observation points of vegetation stands, which will assist in the production of an accurate vegetation map for this area. We will begin analyzing the data collected this year along with other data collected in 2008 during this fall, and detailed (alliance-level) vegetation mapping will begin in the winter.

Northern Sierra Nevada Foothills (NSNF) Project (Contract-funded)

CNPS and sub-contractor Aerial Information Systems (AIS) continued work on mapping in the NSNF with funding from the Department of Fish and Game (DFG). AIS has been mapping and photo-interpreting vegetation for the 4th quarter of the eco-region (from Tuolumne County to Mariposa County), while DFG has provided us with an allocation of over 300 polygons to assess their map accuracy in the third quarter of the study area.

CNPS staff, Danielle Roach and Suzanne Harmon, spent three weeks doing 97 map accuracy assessment surveys, and we have collected a total of 280 surveys through June (from El Dorado to Tuolumne County). To access private lands, Kendra Sikes received and processed access permits, and she sent/processed requests to private landowners who own large properties. We plan to complete the mapping and field verification around the beginning of next year.

Southern Sierra Nevada Foothills (SSNF) Project (Donation-funded)

With funding from a private donor, CNPS staff completed over 130 baseline vegetation samples and a few hundred reconnaissance surveys during the spring/ summer in southern Mariposa, Madera, and Fresno Counties of the SSNF eco-region. We analyzed the diversity of vegetation types collected this spring and during the spring of 2008, and we set up a new mapping project for a focused 10,000-acre study area. Danielle, Julie, and Suzanne are producing a detailed vegetation map of McKenzie Preserve at Big Table Mountain and surrounding lands near Millerton Lake, and we met with the Sierra Foothills Conservancy to exhibit it. The map includes over 20 different vegetation and habitat types, including vernal pool complexes, blue and interior live oak woodlands, buckeye patches, willow riparian, and open grasslands.

Fen Research Project of National Forest Lands (Contract/Grant-funded)

Kendra and Deborah worked on final phases of a fen conservation assessment report, including regional descriptions of fen/meadow areas found on US Forest Service (USFS) lands. Kendra and Julie also identified sampling priorities for new fen/meadow surveys this year, including fieldwork in the Sequoia National Forest and Lake Tahoe Basin. With funding from the Region 5 USFS and from the Southern Nevada Public Lands Management Act, we have selected three sites on

the Sequoia and six sites on the Basin. This will allow us to differentiate fen vegetation diversity and quality on our public lands.

Mojave Network of National Park Service Vegetation Mapping Project (Contract-funded)

Julie and Deborah finished classifying existing vegetation data for the Mojave Network of the National Park Service (NPS), including over 600 surveys from Lake Mead National Recreation Area, Death Valley National Park (DEVA), and Mojave National Preserve. Deborah also continued quality control of legacy datasets, including data from the Mojave Preserve and Joshua Tree National Park. In May, Julie and Kendra provided training to NPS and other staff in DEVA since they are collecting new vegetation data this summer and next year.

Other Vegetation Program Details

Jennifer and Julie wrote two new grant proposals to NRCS's Conservation Innovation Grants program; we received funding for one of the two, which will provide us with follow-up support for our grasslands project. We are also working on grant application concepts to support continued work in our southern Sierra Foothills project. Also, the Vegetation Committee met in early June to discuss current work in the program and related agencies. At the meeting, we discussed vegetation inventory/mapping needs including detailed mapping across the Mojave & Sonoran Desert ecosystems, as well as the southern Sierra Nevada foothills and Valley/Foothill riparian vegetation, to assist in future conservation and management actions.

SALES REPORT – authored by Tara Hansen

We continue to shrink our inventory on the non-CNPS book titles, and now have started to focus on selling more of our own CNPS titles. Although sales on the MCV2 and the Moss books remain strong, sales on some of our aging titles are really lagging. The CNPS press titles include some truly wonderful books, and we want to get them into the hands of people that can use them and make room for planning new CNPS press titles in the future. As you know, we opened a part time position to handle book sales and provide other administrative support in May. We currently have a student working in this position - Shi'Nae Carter, who is available to help with chapter orders and shipping.

Sales for *A Manual of California Vegetation, Second Edition* have nearly topped 900 volumes and remain strong. The CNPS-exclusive title, *California Mosses*, has sold 474 in the same time frame. The companion moss glossary, *Mosses and Other Bryophytes*, has sold 177.

Other excellent CNPS press titles with large inventories include:

CNPS Press
A Manual of California Vegetation, 2nd Edition - Retail \$82.00
Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants
Rare Lilies of California
Plants of the Tahoe Basin (Softcover)
Plants of the Tahoe Basin (Hardcover)
Plant Life in the World's Mediterranean Climates (Softcover)
Origin and Relationships of the California Flora
Flowering Plants and Ferns of Mount Diablo, California (Softcover)
Flowering Plants and Ferns of Mount Diablo, California (Hardcover)
A Flora of Sonoma County (Hardcover)
A Flora of Lassen Volcanic National Park, California
Field Guide to the Vernal Pools of Mather Field
Ecology, Conservation, and Management of Vernal Pool Ecosystems
Ecology and Restoration of Northern California Coastal Dunes
Ecology and Management of Rare Plants of Northwestern California
Conservation and Management of Rare and Endangered Plants
California's Wild Gardens
California's Changing Landscapes
The Best Spring Ever

MEMBERSHIP REPORT – by Stacey Flowerdew and Tara Hansen

Changes in Member Benefits

As many of you may have heard, at the June meeting the CNPS state board voted to reduce the number of *Fremontia* issues published annually to three per year beginning in October of 2011. The decision was made to help reduce fixed expenses relative to current revenues, as *Fremontia* costs about \$20,000 per issue to produce and distribute.

The website has been updated to reflect the changes, and the renewal letters now include a notification of the change in benefits so members are informed at the time they choose to renew their memberships. We are also working on an insert for the membership brochure that should be given to all potential new members starting this fall. While this insert is being developed, please be sure to mark out “quarterly” and write in “3 per year” on any brochures you use for sign ups this fall.

Fremontia Update

Fremontia editor Bob Hass and I have been working on a schedule to help CNPS get caught up on the publication of past issues. Volume 37.3 was released this spring. Volume 37.4 and 38.1 – a double issue with the leading article focused on the Franciscan Manzanita – will be distributed in late October. Volume 38.2 and 38.3, another double issue on fire will be released in January or February of 2011.

Changes to Membership Accounting (reprinted from June’s report)

With our new database system, it is important to update all of you on a few key membership accounting changes. As previously reported, the 2010 membership numbers reported to Chapter Council and Chapter Membership Chairs no longer include members who have not yet renewed, but are still within the 90 day lapse grace period. In the past, we have included members in our current membership count that were lapsed up to 90 days past their renewal anniversary date.

Also starting this year, our new database system allows us to track renewals and rejoins separately so they will no longer be lumped into one number as “renewals” but reported separately. A rejoin is someone who has renewed their membership after the normal 90 day lapse grace period has expired. Members sometimes come back several years after allowing their original membership to lapse, so this category allows us to track the original membership record while recognizing that it has not been a continuously renewed membership.

Renewals are counted based on the anniversary date, even if the member’s renewal gift is received early or within the 90 day lapse grace period of the actual renewal date. This means that the renewal numbers for any given month can change for up to 3 months after the actual reporting date, so you could see the renewal count number increase for any given month on subsequent reports. This method of tracking renewals will distribute our renewal numbers a little more evenly throughout the year as the date of renewal is no longer tied to the membership gift date, and the member’s renewal anniversary date stays the same year after year.

Membership Trends

Trends through July indicate that our 2010 join rate will surpass last year’s join rate of 11.3%. Renewal trends also look strong and will be further impacted by the results of a special lapsed member appeal we did over the summer.

Stacey Flowerdew has also been personally calling members who are more than 90 days lapsed that have not renewed and has had very strong early results. Since Stacey started personally contacting members, an average of one out of every 6 members contacted by phone later renewed, and one out of every 9 contacted by e-mail later renewed.

Member Change of Address: One way to streamline the exchange of data updates from the chapters to the state office on member records is to direct members to use our web tool for address updates. This form is located at <http://www.cnps.org/cnps/join>. When address information is entered into this online form, we are able to retrieve and upload it into the system, negating the need for manual transfer of the information we receive in other ways.

Membership Committee News:

The Membership Committee continues to meet monthly to discuss important issues and initiatives related to membership growth and retention and member benefits, and we are still looking for a few more committee members. If you are working with outreach at your chapter and are able to commit to a minimum of a one hour call each month, please contact Stacey Flowerdew to get on this energetic committee. The current committee currently includes the following participants:

Arvind Kumar, Co-Chair, Santa Clara Valley
Mary Frances Kelly-Poh, Co-Chair, Willis Jepson
Betsey Landis, LA/Santa Monica Mountains
Joan Jernegan, Redbud
Carol Castro, East Bay
Sarah Jayne, Orange County
Dorie Diragosian, Kern
Cindy Kondon, South Coast
Tara Hansen & Stacey Flowerdew, Staff

Chapter Membership Development Grants:

If your chapter applied for a membership development grant this spring, remember that you will need to submit a brief report describing the results of the activity with your funding request once the activity is completed.

Chapter Membership Trends

The first seven months of 2010 reveal seven chapters with double digit net growth. Of these, Channel Islands Chapter really stands out with 58 new members added and net membership growth of 49! Nice job Channel Islands! Another standout is Kern Chapter, a chapter that has struggled for the past couple of years seeing 10 new members, a rejoin from last year, and total growth of 15%! Dorie is doing something right in Kern County! Another special mention goes to Bristlecone Chapter, with 11 new members and 10 rejoined members from prior year lapses. There is great outreach going on east of the Sierras! And finally, we have Santa Clara Valley, a chapter that has somehow managed to sign up 108 new members this year, nearly twice the number of the next runner up. Thanks to all of you for your incredibly hard work with membership recruitment so far this year!