

New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council (NMRPTC)

Coordination Meeting Notes

February 12, 2026

Location: Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge – Visitor Center

1. Welcome & Opening Remarks

Chair: Erika Rowe

- 2026 meeting structure limited to a coordination and updates meeting.
 - Intention to return to a two-day format in 2027, with more dedicated facilitation help:
 - Day 1: Agency/program updates
 - Day 2: Rare plant discussions, nominations/delistings, working group matters
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2. Introductions

Participants represented (approx. 40-45 people were present in-person):

- EMNRD Forestry Division / State Botany Program
- Institute for Applied Ecology (IAE)
- US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- US Forest Service (USFS)
- State Land Office (SLO)
- ABQ BioPark
- New Mexico Natural Heritage Program (NMNH)
- Santa Fe Botanical Garden (SFBG)
- University of New Mexico (UNM Herbarium)

- National Park Service (NPS)
- Native Plant Society of New Mexico (NPS NM)
- Independent consultants, retired botanists, and conservation partners
- Virtual participants (not fully captured, but around 15-20 participants filtered in and out online)

MORNING SESSION

3. New State Plant Records

Presenters: Harpo Faust (UNM Herbarium), Grace McCarthy (NM Natural Heritage)

Overview

- 110 taxa treated in upcoming publication. See associated PowerPoint.
- 19 new state collection records highlighted.
- Additional noteworthy finds discussed.
- 236 new state records (since March 2010) compiled in appendix.
- Data provided to Kelly Allred for upcoming *Flora Neomexicana* revision and updates.
- Importance of properly documenting the state's flora. Once some of these were found and reported, additional populations have been found since.
- New noteworthy finds: *Abutilon parishii* (proposed for rare list), *Papaver coloradense*, *Asplenium palmeri*, *Potentilla saximontana*, *Helictotrichon mortonianum*
- Many records represent:
 - Alpine disjuncts extending Colorado distributions south
 - Peripheral Mojavean/Chihuahuan taxa
 - Brokeoff Mountains and Apache Box
 - Non-native introductions
- Reporting records often leads to additional discoveries.
- Important that rare plant data are documented:

- Submitting vouchers to UNM Herbarium nhnm@unm.edu
- Submitting data to Natural Heritage gmccartha@unm.edu
- Informing land management directly

Potential Future Nominations (Under Consideration)

Several species (14) identified as possible future NMRPL nominees based on:

- Peripheral distributions
- Disjunct populations
- G-rank or conservation significance, with limited occurrences in New Mexico

4. NM Rare Plant Watch (New Citizen Science Program led by EMNRD with many supporting partners)

Presenter: Katie Kline (EMNRD Botany Program)

Problem Statement

- Many rare plant records are outdated and have not been updated since first recorded.
- Limited professional capacity for revisits.
- Outdated data hinders conservation and management decisions.

Solution:

- Train volunteer, citizen/community scientists to revisit old data and collect data, provide photos
- Inspired by established programs (e.g., Wisconsin, Washington, Montana).

2026 Pilot Structure

- 50 target species
- ~290 assignments for 2026 (element occurrences)
- Excluded:
 - Private land
 - Tribal land

- National Park Service lands (onerous permitting required)
- Recent burn scars
- Extremely old records (e.g., historic records with vague location data)
- Most federally/state-listed plants
- Cacti (initially excluded due to sensitivity of collection)

Volunteer Process

1. Volunteer selects assignment (obscured township-level map).
2. Signs confidentiality/Liability agreement.
3. Receives detailed location packet.
4. Conducts survey independently.
5. Submits:
 - Presence/absence
 - Population size (counts)
 - Phenology
 - Spatial polygon
 - Records any threats observed
 - Photographs for verification

Data Flow

Volunteer signs up for an assignment → visits/relocates old occurrence → collects and submits data → QC review → Submit to Natural Heritage → share with associated Land Management Agencies

Technology

- ArcGIS Experience-based viewing platform to select assignments (to be hosted on NM Rare Plants website but is a Forestry Division-hosted map).
- Offline-capable Survey123 app (developed by Clay Meredith at IAE).
- Ease-of-access filters under development (distance to road, terrain slope).

Timeline

- Platform launch: March 2026
- Volunteer training webinar: March 2026
- Pilot season: 2026

Funding

- **NEW!** NM Native Plant Society awarded grant funding for a half-time Volunteer Coordinator (to be housed at IAE) for first pilot year.
- All consulted state programs strongly recommended future funding for long-term sustainability.

Future Expansion

- Collaboration with:
 - Identify NPSNM chapters leads to help train and organize group outings
 - Seed banking programs (CPC partners)
 - Land management agencies
- Potential training workshops (ID, field safety, navigation)

5. USFWS FWS Work Plan Updates, Gypsum Wild Buckwheat Announcements, and Recovery Plan Efforts

Presenter: Katie Sandbom (USFWS)

Inflation Reduction Act Recovery Funding

- \$2 million available via NFWF (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) grants.
- Prioritized for:
 - Species eligible for downlisting/delisting within 3 years, or,
 - Species overlapping with development priorities.
- **Gypsum Wild Buckwheat** is the only NM plant that qualifies.

Proposed Project Types

1. Soil suitability study
2. Habitat suitability ensemble modeling

3. Private landowner outreach
4. Surveys in modeled habitat
5. Conservation agreements
6. Augmentation of Head Hollow population
7. Restoration trials

Kuenzler's Hedgehog Cactus

- New genetic work may support a listing status change:
 - Two separate lineages confirmed.
 - Didn't find hybridization
 - Below generic-level differentiation threshold.
- Implications for listing status pending expert interpretation.

Recovery Workgroups

- Historically successful (esp for Holy Ghost ipomopsis, Knowlton's cactus).
- Proposal to reinvigorate species-based recovery workgroups for higher priority species to discuss genetics, monitoring, recovery efforts, establishing new populations.
- Seeking Council interest.

Workplan Context

- Listing budget significantly reduced.
- To be determined how non-court ordered species' listing will go forward and when they will be.
- Downlisting/delisting funding remains.
- Several species status updates discussed (see slides for details).
- Under review:
 - Arizona eryngo, [Final Recovery Plan for Arizona Eryngo now available](#)
 - *Castilleja ornata*, recently listed in 2024, effective 2025. final recovery plan coming out in 2027.

- *Allium gooddingii*: under review. There was an SSA completed in 2024; this is a discretionary listing review
- *Aliciella formosa*: under review with an SSA in progress. not a court ordered species, 12 month finding is TBD
- *Linum allredii* (petitioned last year- court ordered 9 month finding coming out this year).
- *Muilla lordsburgana*: not listed or petitioned, just on radar due to recent threats.
- *Pediomelum pentaphyllum* (not listed – not warranted finding 2019 but emerging threats and keeping on radar),
- *Coryphantha sneedii var sneedii*: recommends waiting for Mark Porter’s paper
- *Coryphantha sneedii var leei*: (update but Marty recommends waiting for Mark Porter’s paper)

Common Name	Product	FY Due
Allred's flax	9-month finding	FY26
American Hart's-tongue fern	5YR or proposed delisting rule	FY26
Aztec gilia	SSA	TBD
Aztec gilia	12-month finding	TBD
Clover's cactus	SSA	FY26
Clover's cactus	12-month finding	FY27
Cochise pincushion cactus*	5YR	FY26
Holy Ghost ipomopsis	5YR	FY26
Leoncita false foxglove	SSA	TBD
Leoncita false foxglove	12-month finding	TBD
Navajo bladderpod	SSA	TBD
Navajo bladderpod	12-month finding	TBD
swale paintbrush	Draft recovery plan	FY26
swale paintbrush	Final recovery plan	FY27
Tharp's bluestar	12-month finding	TBD, possibly FY26
Wright's marsh thistle	Draft recovery plan	TBD
Wright's marsh thistle	Final recovery plan	TBD
Zuni fleabane	5YR	FY26

6. 2025 Rare Plant Collection and Monitoring Updates at IAE

Presenter: Clay Meredith (Ecologist, IAE)

BLM Demographic Monitoring

- 115 transect plots across 10 species.
- Transition matrix modeling & PVA analysis.
- 2024 data summarized today.
- BLM monitoring began in 2017, focused on 10 BLM sensitive spp.
- BLM funding for agreement terminated; 2026 data to be collected by BLM staff, not IAE.
- NPSNM funding was awarded to facilitate completing 2025 reporting.

Monitoring Trends (2017-2024)

- Some species declining (e.g., *Aliciella formosa* – low seedling survival).
- Divergence observed in *Sclerocactus cloverae* populations between the northern and southern populations (northern doing poorly, southern pop seems ok).
- *Amsonia tharpii* and *Linum allredii* trending downward.
- *Abronia bigelovii* showing good years in 2024 and 2025, but just started monitoring.

Seed Banking

2025 collections included:

- *Cymopterus spellenbergii*
- *Delphinium sapellonis*
- *Mentzelia springeri*
- *Atriplex griffithsii*
- *Astragalus puniceus* var. *gertrudis*
- *Salvia amissa* (Arizona)

2026 seed collection targets (on DOI lands):

- *Cymopterus spellenbergii*
- *Mentzelia springeri*
- *Pediomelum pentaphyllum*
- *Oenothera organensis*
- *Scrophularia laevis*
- *Erigeron acomanus*

Survey123 - Rare Plant Watch and Collections tracking

- Coordinated system to track rare plant collections across CPC partners (3 organizations/agencies in NM doing this so a way to stay organized).
- Data platform developed to collect data by volunteers for the Rare Plant Watch easily shared information with ERMND, heritage and agencies.

AFTERNOON SESSION

7. Partner Share-Outs

(Agency updates, new programs, funding, Upcoming field work, Relevant personnel changes or new staff introductions, Announce upcoming events, such as botany forays, Open stage for other updates)

Santa Fe Botanical Garden (Cristina Salvador)

- Strategic planning completed.
- CPC/Forest Service collections ongoing
 - four species collected in 2025
 - scheduling 2026 collection (not final yet)
- Internship programs active (Jill and Stanley Jankowski Science and Conservation Internship); about to interview for 2026 position that will be shared with EMNRD Botany Program.
- Conservation art collaboration with Christina Selby—event on 2/12 at Chomp.

- Received herbarium specimens from NM Natural History Institute (Roger Peterson's collections starting around 1970s); label digitization complete.
 - Seeking funding for georeferencing and continued work.
 - Includes state and endangered plants, Gila, Bosque del Apache, and other special areas.

NM Natural Heritage (Grace McCartha)

- S1/S2 rank updates (BLM-funded).
- NM Rare Plants Website upgrades/changes underway.
- 1,000+ upland vegetation plots surveyed in 2025 (Este is on the NVC board so funding comes from that entity).
- Beginning update of Important Plant Areas with EMNRD.
- NM Rare Arthropods website now includes insect data – modeled after NM Rare Plants.
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State Land Office (Katrina Adamczyk)

- SLO manages 9 million surface acres.
- New wildlife biological staff added (Allyson Richins), formerly Katrina's position.
- Sheer's cactus transplant (for oil/gas) success near Carlsbad, worked in consultation with EMNRD botany staff (20 plants removed and will be transplanted to a new fenced off heron rookery).

Lincoln National Forest (Adam McCullough)

- New population of Kuenzlers hedgehog cactus – approx. 28 individuals found (northernmost occurrence!).
- *Cirsium vinaceum* impacted by musk thistle biocontrol (weevils) and weevils have spread. Approx 60 populations were revisited in 2025 and only about one site did not have weevils. 2026 revisits planned to monitor spread.
- *Argemone pinnatisecta* showing slight positive trend, but only in Alamo canyon, which is the largest population. Still need to understand the how seeds persist in the seed bank and for how long.
- Disaster recovery from the Ruidoso fires remains top priority for the Forest.

- Developing non-native/invasive species program for the post-fire areas
- New EIS developed and should be signed in June, now out for objections. Once done, they'll be able to treat weeds across the forest. Never been able to do that for at least a decade, so good news.

BLM (State Office & Las Cruces Field Office)

[Sam Reiss - state]

- Lost contracts/agreements due to admin changes; rare plant demographic monitoring capacity reduced. Sam and Maria completing 2026 surveys, filling in with one seasonal technician, help from EMNRD and other partners
- Special Status Species Manual (BLM-NM 6840) rescinded which had proactive conservation material, now reverted to 2008 version, which still has survey protocols.
- Habitat model validation in the works with USGS for *Sclerocactus mesae-verdae*.
- Bumblebee Atlas trainings (May 9 ABQ, May 16 LC). Project funded by Carrol Petrie foundation and developed by Xerces
- Rylee Hostrawser has resigned from the botany position in Farmington; Jeremiah Westerman is filling in along with wildlife biologist John Kendall.

[Kirsten Romig - LC]

- Hired several seasonal staff to help with expanded *Muilla lordsburgana* surveys, some rare plant monitoring, other species surveys TBD. Need more surveys for *Muilla* due to lots of transmission line construction.
- *Opuntia arenaria* not doing great - impacted by increasing urbanization and energy (e.g., pipelines) development projects;
 - transplant survival study only had ~17% survival rate. These transplants were from a 2006/2007 project to build a retention dam near El Paso.
 - Wild populations seem anecdotally to be doing ok, as long as not impacted by development. But a hard drought has impacted them.
 - Department of Defense Land Exchange along the border has limited our access to many of these populations along the NM<>Mexico border.

- *Lepidospartum burgessii* populations, near the border of Dell City, TX, in the alkali flats beneath the Brokeoff Mountains, significantly declining; possible loss of obligate pollinator? Will hopefully do eDNA study to find out what is pollinating this species.
- *Adenophyllum wrightii* rediscovered near Silver City while doing a survey prior to a stock pile for a mining company being expanded. ~139 individuals found. Efforts to mitigate for these plants.
- New greenhouse for propagation and soil seed bank studies.
- Collaboration with Native Plant Society on spring restoration at a site near the western portion of the Organ Mountains NM; decimated by cattle trampling and grazing
 - Collaboration with SLO. It's currently in the works as a land exchange so will eventually be owned by BLM.
 - SLO currently has wildlife cameras out there? Cattle are removed.
 - NPSNM asked if this could be a site to introduce the state endangered *Agalinis calycina*.
 - Doing species reintroduction for restoration.

Valles Caldera National Preserve (Ben Stout)

- 1st time they had capacity to spend time collecting to update the Park's species list; 20 new species added to park list; several county records; 50 species added from the last few years.
- Highlights of new species include 3 new *Botrychium* spp. found; 1 new wood lily population.
- Funding approved for a shared nursery/seed facility (with Bandelier).

UNM Herbarium updates (Harpo Faust)

- Deposit your specimens with the herbarium! They have space. Love agencies that support us financially too. Shout out to NMNH as being agency that deposits the most specimens in the herbarium. Haven't gotten 2025 agency collections yet.
- **Gila Botany Foray 2026!** Likely Northern Gila, October 8-11. Will send out formal announcement soon.
- Next plant ID night – working through NMNH collections 2/26.

- Meet new curator – **Diana Gamba**.
 - Main interest is weedy plants but lots of opportunity to integrate with rare plants. Adding collections into some of the current projects would be good to learn about life history.

ABQ BioPark (Peri Lee)

- Global Observation Research Initiative in Alpine Environments (**GLORIA**) site in New Mexico, data was collected historically by NMNH. Biopark looking to take on the project. Looking for volunteer interest to help support the data collection. Likely in Sangre de Cristo mountains this year. ~ 5 mile backpack in.
- Received \$10,000 grant, still need \$5,000 for the project. Reach out to Peri Lee if interested! Tentative dates- early July.

Native Plant Society of New Mexico (Sylvan Kaufman; Santa Fe Chapter President Statewide Vice President)

- Awarded Rare Plant Watch funding. Received 19 carter fund applications. Awarded \$34,000 in grants not including rare plant watch funding. Additional UNM herbarium funding. Can read about grants on the website. Look forward to participating on rare plant watch, but also want to work with partners to secure long term funding for this program. Need to help advocate for state or other funding, if anyone has ideas reach out to Sylvan.
- Also writing comment letters during public comment periods. Let Sylvan know if there's something they should know about.

Navajo Nation private botanist Arnold Clifford – Four corners region.

- Update on botanical work in that area. 35 years of plant collecting.
- Fourth largest herbarium in New Mexico. No grants/funding, all his own expenses. A few years ago was nationally registered. Unique collection because of geography and areas not accessible to public including tribal lands. Botanical knowledge comes from seven generations, predates federal laws regarding collections.
- Now have ~35,000 plants in his private herbarium, constantly adding new specimens. Herbarium code is CMH (Carrizo Mountain Herbarium).
 - UNM donated about 3,000 specimens.
 - ~1000 specimens from Jessica Roscoe's (sp?) master's thesis.
 - ~1,500 plants from Doug Lobick's (sp?) master's thesis,
 - ~3,000 plants from Lorraine Yates.
 - ~ 500 plants from Nevada.
 - Close to 6,000 species from California.

- A lot of rare endemics from four corner states.
- In the process of working with 30 new species collected through Southwest (maybe 10 from NM). Possibly new *Abronia* and *Mentzelia* species.
- Teaches and gives lectures on geology (his academic background), but also ethnobotany, using Navajo names and cultural knowledge, including ceremonies. Willing to lead field learning of plants and geology.
- Reach out to Arnold if want to support herbarium, Venmo shared on Rare Plant Listserv. Stop by the herbarium you're in the area.

Navajo Nation Natural Heritage (Shannon Lencioni)

- **First Bioblitz!** Asaayi Lake, April 25-26th. Western slopes of the Chuskas. Asked a few folks to be expert volunteers.
- New locations of *Astragalus heilii* (Heil's milkvetch) – about four miles from type location.
- *Physaria navajoensis* (Navajo bladderpod) – three years of monitoring data collection, did some data analysis. One population declining, two others stable/increasing. Ask for slides for figures.

University of Northern Colorado (Mit McGlaughlin)

- ***Pediocactus knowltonii*** – genetic diversity is high both in natural populations and transplanted sites, which is great news. Still working on analysis and results.
- He will be in the field doing more *Sclerocactus cloverae* work in 2026. Looking for help from community for *Sclerocactus* locations south and west of Albuquerque. Likely will be identified as *S. parviflorus*.
 - Looking into unique genetics in that area and what could end up being a new species.
 - Targeting more recent Clovers cactus locations to the east of the Nacimiento formation which is outside of described range. He is hoping to sample from those sites.
- New Masters student defending thesis on *Astragalus riplei* at the end of March, Mitt will share link.
- New PhD student looking at rare *Mentzelia*'s.

USFWS, Colorado (Sarah Quadt)

- Colorado rare plant technical committee being brought back together, similar group to New Mexico. Formalizing group charter now, helps to have an idea of others states processes.

NHNM Este Muldavin

- Doing a vegetation map for the state. Interested to know where/when people go to do field work.
- Este would like to provide map units to illustrate where data is needed to those doing field work; if you're in the same area we need list of plants and cover estimates in data gaps, as this will help with map validation. Reach out if you're willing to help.

EMNRD Forestry Division (Erika Rowe)

- Brazos Box several new county records, including new *Carex retrorsa* state record, and 3 (?) new bryophyte state records from Chuskas and Brazos.
- Sharing another intern with Santa Fe Botanical Garden for 2026; interviews starting next week.
- Upcoming 2026 fieldwork for FWS Sect 6:
 - *Erigeron rhizomatous* (entire range of plant)
 - *Escobaria sneedii* var. *sneedii* (Franklin Mnts, mostly in TX)
 - *Allium gooddingii* (Lincoln NF)
- Upcoming 2026 fieldwork for BLM funded work:
 - *Muilla lordsburgana* (focusing on state trust lands and getting a better handle on range extent)
 - Ongoing *Astragalus humillimus* long-term monitoring transects, *Aliciella formosa*, *Sclerocactus cloverae*, *S. cloverae*, *Amsonia tharpjii*.
 - Exploring establishing new long-term monitoring for *Justicia wrightii* and *Coryphantha robustispina* ssp. *scheeri* (the latter getting hit hard by oil/gas development)
 - *Pediocactus knowltonii* – need to address whether to continue data collection for seed plots that were established in 1994.
 - Plants growing into the steel grid that demarcates the 2x3 inch plots. No longer measuring seeding success, just recruitment.
 - Rediscovered old “Navajo plots” that were a transplant study that Bob Sivinski started in 1985 and 1995 but abandoned in 2007 due to poor recruitment. Currently still around 24 flowering individuals found.

- Assisted with SLO/Lessee transplant of 20 scheers cactus; we (EMNRD botany) developed the monitoring plan for these cacti. Very controversial option as there is significant uptick in impacts to this species so need to figure out a way to mitigate impacts, but need more data.
- Rare Plant Conservation Strategy (2026–2032) revision in development and will be revised to reduce length and serve more as a strategic plan for the botany community in the future.
- RPTC draft bylaws circulated for comment – will vote on this in the near future.
- Rare Plants website updates ongoing.
- Logo contest for Rare Plant Watch planned, will announce how to submit and vote on artwork by next year’s meeting.
- Place for the Rare Plant Watch will be located here:
<https://nmrareplants.unm.edu/nmrareplantwatch>

8. Reviewing Rare Plant Nomination Process & Rare Plant Working Group (RPWG)

Presenter: Martin Purdy (EMNRD Botany Program)

- At last year’s RPTC meeting, Erika and I proposed the development of a RPWG and a new nomination process and ranking system for rare plant list and classes.
 - Four RPWG meetings held since Feb 2025;
 - Revised ranking framework completed, aligned with NatureServe.
 - cross-walked currently listed plants into new Classes
 - refined rare plant nomination process and documents
 - five new plant nominations thus far using new system.
- New nomination process:
 - Species proposed and submitted to RPWG;
 - presentation now given at RPWG meeting.
 - Vote at subsequent meeting.

- Dissent must be data-driven and must align with disagreement then with a NatureServe rank
 - Final
- Considering:
 - Threat suffix revisions.
 - “Near-endemic” inclusion for S3/4 G4/T4 species.
 - G5 species
- Discussion of ranking limitations of obligate host plants for pollinators.

9. New Rare Plant Nominations

Proposed (RPWG will vote on these at the next meeting in March):

- **Erigeron spellenbergii** – Class 1 (Bob Sivinski)
- **Betula glandulosa** – Class 3 (Ben Stout)

Recently adopted to list during RPWG meetings from previous year:

- **Erigeron abajoensis** – Class 1 (Grace McCartha)
- **Abutilon parishii** – Granite Gap record (Harpo Faust)
- **Cladium californicum** – Proposed change in NS rank to S2 and rare plant list (Marty Purdy)

Upcoming Dates

- **Next RPWG Meeting:** March 20, 2026 – 10:00 AM (Katie Kline/Marty Purdy)
- **Navajo Nation Bioblitz:** Asaayi Lake, April 25-26th (Shannon Lencioni)
- **Bumblebee Atlas trainings:** May 9 ABQ, May 16 LC (Sam Reiss)
- **UNM Botany Foray, possibly northern Gila:** October 8-11 (Harpo Faust)

Action Items & Follow-Up

- Post presentations online from RPTC meeting.
- Launch Rare Plant Watch platform (March 2026).

- Circulate NFWF RFP when released (USFWS).
- Provide comments on draft RPTC bylaws.
- Continue to develop inter-agency rare plant collection tracking system.
- Submit new records to:
 - NM Natural Heritage
 - Relevant land management districts
 - UNM Herbarium (voucher deposition)