

CNPS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

TO: Board of Directors
Chapter Council

FROM: Amanda Jorgenson
Executive Director

SUBJECT: Executive Director's Report, March - May 2008

DATE: May 22, 2008

This report summarizes the main activities we carried out during March-May. I would like to take this opportunity to thank each, and every member of our staff (paid and unpaid) who have worked with me to promote our programs and strengthen the capacity of our organization to make fulfill its mission. We have an excellent team!

CNPS PROGRAMS

Conservation Program

Search for a Conservation Program Director

In March, we decided to start the search process all over again and re-advertised the position. We have been actively promoting the position and have received a few applications. In the mean time, we have been fundraising for the position. We would like to thank those individuals and chapters that have made financial contributions to support the program.

Invasive Exotics Working Group

Members of the Invasive Exotics Working Group, Bob Case, Don Mayall, and Jake Sigg attended Weed Day at the Capitol March 12 and lobbied a number of Assemblymembers and Senators. We were effective in persuading legislators to retain funding for Weed Management Areas (WMA). On April 11 they also attended a presentation on management of invasives on Coyote Ridge, Santa Clara County, with San Mateo County staff. In mid-April Bob Case attended the first annual National CWMA in Reno. He also attended the CA WMA Advisory Committee in Sacramento to discuss the funding formula for CDFG WMA allotments. The end result is that there will be a little over \$16,000 for each county in a WMA and about \$200,000 available for competitive grants. Bob gave talks on invasive weeds to three watershed and landscape groups, and a talk to the Shasta CNPS chapter. In mid-May, Don took part in a field trip with the Santa Clara County WMA to study the effects of the Coe Park fire on the spread of invasive and native plant recovery.

CNPS Legislative Program

Legislative activities increased this past period and focused on the dozens of bills set for

legislative committee hearings. CNPS took positions on numerous bills, submitted eight letters registering positions, and joined onto four position letters with other conservation organizations. While most were registering support for certain bills [e.g., SB 1595 - vegetation mgmt, SB 1617 - fire fees, SB 1165 - CEQA public information, AB 2785 - wildlife corridors, AB 2537 - volunteer workers] others were problem bills we were opposed to [SB 1618 - fire clearance, SB 1295 - Coastal Commission appeals, AB 1991 - Half Moon Bay & waiver of all environmental law]. In most cases, letters are followed with appropriate testimony in legislative committee hearings.

In addition, CNPS will join other Green California partners on 6 Floor Alerts that will be distributed to legislators as they consider bills on the floor of the Senate and Assembly in the next two weeks.

We have maintained an active presence in Green California deliberations by frequently joining conference calls of subgroups and attending all meetings of the entire coalition, including their extraordinary activities: legislative/enviro dinners (3/10) and lobby day (4/9). CNPS was also represented at PCL's lobby day earlier this week (5/20).

Legislative staff spent a lot of time working with Senator Lowenthal on a bill to require nurseries to label native plants. We provided options and arguments in support of the idea, however, the Senator decided instead to require labeling plants as to their average water needs.

Staff prepared a legislative status report for the March Chapter Council meeting and participated in focused discussions of CNPS policies, horticulture issues, and legislation. The Legislative Committee held two conference calls but only two members called. We will continue to have these meetings and hope more committee members participate.

Legislative staff also responded in a timely manner to several requests from CNPS members regarding specific bills.

We also carried out other miscellaneous activities.

- After three failed attempts to present the CNPS 2007 Legislator-of-the-Year Award to Assemblywoman Wolk, we finally delivered it to her in person in her office on 4/22.
- Submitted an article for the CNPS Bulletin with a legislative update
- Prepared a letter to chapters with regard to taking positions on legislation
- Participated in a meeting of conservation groups with Daniel Richards, a new Fish & Game Commission appointee (did not see any reason to support or oppose at this time)

Rare Plant Program

Over the past three months, Nick continued to make updates to the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory. Review of CNDDDB data has resulted in hundreds of changes to the CNPS Rare Plant Inventory. Most of the changes were updates to the threats, phenology, elevation ranges, and the habitat of hundreds of taxa.

Six plants, *Sisyrinchium longipes* (List 2), *Carex klamathensis* (List 1B), and *Rhamnus alnifolia* (List 2), *Pentachaeta aurea* ssp. *allenii* (List 1B), *Navarretia gowenii* (List 1B), and *Navarretia ojaiensis* (List 1B) were added to the CNPS Inventory after going through the rare plant review process. In addition, 25 species went through the rare-plant-status review process for nomenclatural changes. For a complete list of these changes, please contact Nick.

Other activities include:

- In collaboration with Pat McItyre, continued planning of the Rare Plant Session of the *2009 CNPS Conservation Conference: Strategies and Solutions*.
- Gave a talk at the March CNPS Chapter Council meeting at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden on the use of The CNPS Rare Plant Inventory, CNDDDB and BIOS.
- On May 23, Nick will participate in a field trip to visit serpentine areas near Chico sponsored by the Northern California Botanists Association.
- On May 30-31, Nick will participate in the National Geographic Society's BioBlitz in the Santa Monica Mountains. During the event, Nick will work with local CNPS volunteers and other members to verify the status of known rare plant occurrences and will attempt to locate new rare plant occurrences.

In April, Nick also found time to get married and spend his honeymoon in the Galapagos Islands!! Please join me in congratulating him and his new wife, Rachel, and in wishing them a long and happy life together.

Vegetation Program

Public Vegetation Workshop at Jasper Ridge

In late March, Donna and Julie along with Josie Crawford and DFG staff led a Vegetation Rapid Assessment Workshop at Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve. The Preserve is a highly diverse research station affiliated with Stanford University, located near the university in the eastern Santa Cruz Mountains. Twenty-four participants attended the 3-day workshop, and we instructed them on how to field survey, categorize, and map vegetation using standardized techniques.

Public Vernal Pool Workshops in the Sacramento Valley

In mid April, Jennifer co-taught a first annual vernal pool classification course with Michael Barbour and Ayzik Solomeshch. This new course focused on distinguishing fine-scale vegetation patterns in central California vernal pools, using a new classification and dichotomous key. Prior to the course, Jennifer and Julie worked with Michael and Ayzik on components of the key and classification. Fourteen people attended the class from various agencies and consulting firms.

Other Field Excursions and Workshops

The Los Angeles/Santa Monica Mtns. Chapter graciously hosted the plant science staff during the March CNPS Chapter Council meeting, where we spent three days camping and botanizing in Joshua Tree National Park. Staff also participated in a day of CNPS's

wetland plant workshop, introducing staff to identification and ecology of riparian and wetland plants in the Sacramento Delta.

Manual of California Vegetation (MCV, with Donation-funding)

Julie worked with Todd Keeler-Wolf and John Sawyer to complete the manuscript for the second edition of the MCV. The three co-authors reviewed and re-edited over 100 descriptions of coastal and herbaceous vegetation alliances. We also wrote or edited all other portions of the book, including sections on the introduction, acknowledgements, overview of vegetation classification, changes since the first edition, treatments of broad habitat types, and vegetation keys. Julie and Todd also began reviewing the GIS maps and written descriptions that denote the distribution/ range of each alliance described in the book.

Andrew reformatted approximately 100 'life history' and 'fire characteristics' information tables for the updated MCV. He contacted and provided files to both John and Neil Sugihara, an interested peer reviewer, to continue refining the information tables. Andrew also reviewed GIS maps in association with alliance descriptions to verifying differences in distribution/range information. He updated and researched MCV literature references using the EndNote bibliography software and alphabetized portions of the descriptions that denote distribution and citations.

Grasslands Research Project

Jennifer gave a presentation at California Native Grasslands Association's (CNGA) 2008 Annual Conference to promote collaboration with other organizations and agencies on grassland research and conservation. This meeting sparked interest of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition and initiated access to private lands for surveying high quality grasslands.

Jennifer and Julie discussed the project's status with our grasslands advisory working group in early May. We outlined recent progress, next stages, and needs for funding of the project. At least two new people have expressed interest in joining this ad hoc group from the recent CNGA meeting. Amanda will be following up with program staff to prioritize/meet with potential funding resources in order to continue this grassland initiative.

Rare Vegetation / Natural Communities Project (Donation and Program-funded)

In April, Donna completed a first full draft of the white paper outlining the importance of rare vegetation and their needs for scientific documentation and conservation. She coordinated review of sections with other co-authors, including Julie, Todd, Sue Bainbridge, and Brian Fulfro. She also contacted others of the small advisory committee to engage them in the project, including Brett Hall from UC Santa Cruz (UCSC). We are circulating a first draft for internal review to different committee members.

We have already utilized Elements of the white paper to seek funding for the rare *vegetation* project. We are pursuing a \$10,000 grant through Patagonia, Inc. to fund a

pilot project to inventory and map high priority habitats in the central coast region. Donna and Julie scoped out collaboration on the project with Brian and Brett, and we focused the proposal on providing regional support to local Chapter and UCSC efforts, including the establishment of a regional center, to further rare vegetation research/mapping of central maritime chaparral.

San Joaquin Valley (SJV) and Sierra Nevada Foothills (SNF) Project (Contract-funded) CNPS, Department of Fish and Game (DFG), and Aerial Information Systems staff began a large, collaborative vegetation classification and mapping project in the SJV and SNF regions. CNPS signed a contract with DFG in early March, 2008, and the first project task involves baseline vegetation sampling and classification of Carrizo Plains, San Joaquin Valley, and southern SNF.

Eric Peterson began working for CNPS in mid-March and Kendra Sikes began early April, as vegetation data/field coordinators in support of this and other projects. Kendra set up a satellite office in Fresno to coordinate field sampling of two seasonal crews in the SJV and southern SNF, and she researched and purchased office equipment for the project. Eric collaborated with DFG staff to prioritize sampling locations by analyzing environmental gradients, including soils, climate, and topography. He also set up geographic map projects in ArcGIS, produced numerous maps to guide field crew sampling, and worked to streamline data-flow in ArcGIS and databases.

Tasks at the beginning of project included: inventorying project materials; reviewing preliminary list of vegetation types; creating a sampling plan, and extensively preparing for fieldwork. CNPS and DFG staff met periodically to identify sampling priorities, land access, field equipment needs, sampling protocols, and field data forms. Eric, Jennifer, and Kendra planned and scheduled work for the field staff, and Julie and Jennifer wrote brief reports and reviewed invoices for the project.

Jennifer coordinated interviews and hiring of 10 seasonal field crew staff by early April. Field crews include Team Leaders: Brianna Collins, Melinda Elster, Stuart Richardson, Lisa Stelzner and Theresa Johnson; and Field Assistants: Andra Forney, Betsy Harbert, Kate Huxster, Melissa Rehder, and Suzanne Harmon. Three crews are working from Sacramento and two from Fresno.

Julie and Jennifer along with DFG staff provided the new CNPS field staff with two weeks of training. We spent one week in Carrizo Plain and one week in Kern County training staff of sampling protocols and plant identification. CNPS staff also attended an 8-hour Wilderness First Aid class in mid-April. Bobbie Foster of Foster Calm instructed the class of sixteen participants.

Andrew and Theresa began preliminary fieldwork in late March, and all 10 field staff joined in by mid-April. So far this season, we have collected more than 240 vegetation surveys with an early focus on herbaceous stands. Some of the lands accessed thus far include conservation easements in Merced and Fresno counties, as well as numerous public lands in Kern County.

Other Vegetation Program Details

Staff provided information to counties, agencies, and consultants regarding new vegetation mapping projects and general vegetation questions. Julie specifically discussed plans for inventorying, classifying, and mapping vegetation on National Park Lands, including the Channel Islands National Park and Pinnacles National Monument.

Staff conducted other administrative tasks, including review of program budgets, staff progress, and plans for the new fiscal year. In late April, Donna took other employment in Colorado, leaving CNPS in good hands with the rare vegetation project. Other tasks already assigned to Donna will be reassigned to other staff over the course of the new fiscal year. Eric and Julie also attended a western regional conference of NatureServe and regional Natural Heritage ecologists. One aspect of the conference was to review high-resolution maps of ecological systems across the western United States including California.

Horticulture Program

Susan Libonati-Barnes, CNPS Shasta Chapter, is the new Horticulture Program Director. She is looking forward to working with the Horticulture Committee to continue developing the program. Peigi Duvall will continue to work with us.

With Arvind's active support we are revitalizing our Horticulture Program. CNPS has made funding available to chapters to organize horticultural classes and workshops. To sustain the growing interest in the use, care and maintenance of native plants in the garden, CNPS will join with Pacific Horticulture and Friends of Regional Parks Botanic Garden to cosponsor a symposium on native plant gardening in the spring of 2009.

Education Program

Plant Science Training Program

Josie continued to develop the Plant Science Training Program. In the past three months we offered the following specialized trainings:

- Rare Plants of San Diego (March)
- Jasper Ridge Vegetation Rapid Assessment (March)
- Vernal Pool Vegetation (April)
- Wetland Plants (may)

We trained about 100 people, seven of whom participated under the new work-study program. The work-study program provides training free of charge to students and botanists/ecologists who are entering the profession and are not able to afford tuition fees. The entire Vegetation Program staff (16) participated in final day of the Wetland Plants workshop.

Due to low enrollment, we had to cancel two workshops: Vernal Pool Plant Taxonomy and Invasive Plants of the Central Valley. While we do not know for sure what the reasons for such low turnout may have been, we think the factors may have played a role. (1) Other organizations such as Cal-IPC, Jepson Herbarium, Chico Herbarium, and CA Native Grassland Association offer similar trainings. To prevent duplication in the future, we need to coordinate better with them. (2) We offered the same course in the same location two years in a row. We need to alternate years and or rotate locations. (3) The financial crisis of the housing market may be having a negative impact in the budgets of many consulting firms.

Josie is coordinating 3-4 additional workshops for summer and fall. In coordination with other workshop providers, we are planning to offer over 14 workshops in January 20-21, immediately after the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference. These training will be provided in coordinating with Jepson Herbarium, California Department of Fish and game, Cal-IPC, California Native Grasslands Association, and others. The workshops are designed for both plant and wildlife people--The Western Section of The Wildlife Society annual conference will follow ours (January 20-22, 2009).

CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference: Strategies and Solutions

Josie has also acquired new responsibilities as Conference Planner, including outreach, fundraising, volunteer recruitment, and continued communication/coordination with the Executive Committee, Program Committee, and Arrangements Committee. We have sent out two announcements for the Call for Papers to around 2,000 people. We have been developing the Exhibitors' brochure and the Registration and Preliminary Program, which we will distribute the end of June. We are also developing the registration procedures—Conference registration opens July 1st!!

The Arrangements Committee held its second bi-monthly coordination meeting in April. This committee is comprised of 14 sub-committees. The meeting focused on the material needed to assemble the Registration and Preliminary Program. We have over 23 volunteers working diligently on the Arrangements Committee developing different aspects of the conference.

In May, Josie attended trainings for Managing Multiple Projects and Conflict Management to ready her for her increased responsibilities.

Publications

Malcolm Margolin, Heyday Executive Director, and Patrick Larkin, Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden Executive Director, have been discussing the concept of a new book as well as conditions for its publication through CNPS Press. The seed photos illustrated in *Fremontia* inspired the book concept. We are enthusiastic about this and other publication projects. We will continue to work with Malcolm to define the terms under which we may publish this book as well as other ways we can develop our publication program.

Sawyer, Keeler-Wolf, and Evens continued to make progress on the Manual of California Vegetation and expect to have a full manuscript by the end of May. Dore Brown is developing a request for bids for a book packager (publication manager).

FINANCE, ADMINISTRATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND OTHER

Finance and Administration

!!! Please take note of the following reminders !!!

Chapter Council/Board Meeting Reimbursements

To account for expenses throughout the year accurately, it is necessary that Chapter Council delegates and Board members submit reimbursement requests within 30 days of the meeting.

General Liability Insurance Renewal

The CNPS General Liability Insurance policy is due to renew on July 1, 2008. To allow sufficient time to obtain competitive price quotes and process the policy, we requested that all chapters return the insurance questionnaires by April 1, 2008. To give chapters sufficient time to gather their information, we mailed the questionnaires on March 7, 2008. We also sent an email notice from the insurance broker. Despite numerous reminders and phone calls, as of May 15, only half of the chapters had submitted their forms.

CNPS must renew its General Liability policy every year and the chapters **must** submit their information when we ask for it. **This is not an option.** The state office simply cannot proceed in a timely manner without the collaboration of all 33 chapters.

Chapters that submit their insurance forms late cause unnecessary delays, make our office staff work overtime, prevent us from getting competitive price quotes, and increase our insurance costs.

Tax Returns/Audit

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, completed in June. 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.

In order to process the tax returns we need each chapter's Ending Inventory report for March 31, 2008 (due April 14, 2008), and the Annual Chapter Statement of Receipts and Expenditures (due April 21, 2008). Unfortunately, several chapter reports are still missing. It is important that the reports are submitted ASAP so that CNPS will not need to file extensions for the tax returns.

Quarterly Sales Tax

We filed the Quarterly Sales Tax report on time by April 30, 2008, but, again, we had to send and amended return because some chapters send their Sales Tax reports late.

It is critical that all chapters submit their Sales Tax reports on time every quarter. The Board of Equalization charges a 10% penalty plus 1% per month for late reports. **Late submissions may cause CNPS to lose its resale license.**

We do not want to lose our resale license!! Book resales are an important source of income for the entire society, which we would like to maintain. We hope that chapters that are infamously late realize the importance of filing these reports on time. We will not mention any names—you know who you are. If late filing persists, however, we will make their names public!!

!!!We thank you in advance for your cooperation in providing the information we need to fulfill our obligations!!!!

Staffing

We have two new staff in the main office: Alana Rose Schwarz, Development Coordinator; and Ruth Angela Marquez, Administrative Assistant. In case you are wondering who is who in our office, CNPS office staff include:

Stacey Flowerdew, Membership and Sales Coordinator

Amanda Jorgenson, Executive Director

Ruth Angela Marquez Waleski, Administrative Assistant

Cari Porter, Finance and Administration Manager

Alana Rose Schwarz, Development Coordinator

As we mentioned during our meeting in February, CNPS and DFG approved and signed a new contract for two years. With this new contract and the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference, the CNPS budget will double over the course of this year. This in turn has increased the number of financial transactions and administrative tasks we have to manage. To manage the increased workload, we revised Stacey Flowerdew's position so she can assist with finance and administration. Stacey will continue to send monthly membership reports to chapters and process book and poster sales. Ruth Angela Marquez Washeleski, will take care of the day-to-day membership tasks, as well as provide general administrative support in the office.

Development

Planned Giving: A couple of months ago, Wells Fargo informed us that June M. Bilisoly (Santa Clara Valley Chapter; who passed away November 11, 2007), left CNPS a fourth of her assets. Wells Fargo will provide us additional information once, the bank has sorted out the details of her trust, paid taxes, etc.

Foundation Funding: We received a grant of \$5,800 from the Teichert Foundation to support the CNPS 2009 Conservation Conference. We submitted a project proposal to Patagonia for a \$9,900 grant to support the rare vegetation project.

Conference Funding: We have submitted more than 30 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 CDFG have all agreed to sponsor the conference. To date, we have confirmed 11 sponsors for about \$60,000.

(BLM, USFS, USFWS, CFI Stokes and Jones, Teichert Foundation, Save the Redwoods, UC Merced, Gordon Leppig, Carol Witham, Sonoma Water District, and PCL). DFG is providing in-kind support. We will continue to promote the conference to ensure we receive the necessary funding for the conference.

Book Sales: Stacey researched new titles, compiled, and designed the Spring Catalog, which has been arriving in mail boxes everywhere.

Membership: Ruth Angela Marquez Washeleski has taken over the day-to-day membership tasks in the office. Stacey Flowerdew will continue to send monthly membership reports to chapters.

New CNPS members have been receiving coupons for discounts on subscriptions to *Bay Nature* and *Pacific Horticulture* in their new member packets. Current CNPS members are 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 local chapter newsletters, *The CNPS Bulletin* and *Fremontia*.

We are now exploring possibilities of collaboration with CNPS and Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden to promote membership in both our institutions.

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

INTER-INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONS

I have represented CNPS at various meetings:

- CESHA (California Endangered Species Alliance), monthly teleconference calls
- Coordination meetings with UC Merced, CESHA, and US FWS
- West Region Natural Heritage Conference (April 14-17, Lake Tahoe City)
- I gave a presentation at the West Region Natural Heritage Conference (April 14-17, Lake Tahoe City) on the long-term collaboration between CNPS and the Department of Fish and Game.
- I attended the Annual Dinner of the California League of Conservation Voters in San Francisco (May 9), as well as a fund raising event for Terra Peninsular in Oakland (May 10).