FUNDING: Native Plant Conservation Initiative Grant Program Cancelled

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has decided to dissolve the Native Plant Conservation Initiative (NPCI) grant program as of 2013. NPCI was started in 1995 when the Plant Conservation Alliance teamed up with the Foundation to address the lack of funding available for plant conservation work. The Federal funds for NPCI came primarily from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and USDA Forest Service (USFS). Over the course of nearly two decades, NPCI funded 315 native plant projects with 7.2 million dollars in federal investment used to leverage 11.9 million dollars in matching funds.

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s explanation for its decision is: “Due to lack of operating funds, the Native Plant Conservation Initiative has been retired at the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will continue and strengthen its investments in native plants and their habitats through other Foundation conservation initiatives.”

NPCI was a great source of funding for native and rare plants which get less than 2% of recovery dollars under the Endangered Species Act and less than 2% of Federal biological research dollars. Peggy Olwell, the chair of the Plant Conservation Alliance’s Federal Committee, noted that “The NPCI grant program will be sorely missed by agencies and partners alike.”

NPCI addressed the conservation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and restoration of native plants and their ecosystems on a national level, with projects funded across the continental United States to Alaska and Hawai’i and as far away as American Samoa. Projects addressed priorities established by one or more of the funding federal agencies and fell within at least one of six focal areas for plant conservation: partnerships, education, restoration, research, sustainability, and creating data linkages. NPCI-supported projects ranged from research on a single imperiled plant species to multi-state broad-scale restoration projects; habitat mapping to propagating native plants; assisting State-wide conservation strategies to developing plant and pollinator monitoring protocols; creating native plant curricula to restoration manuals; coloring books to illustrated flora; preserving traditional knowledge to plant salvages; germplasm preservation to native plant demonstration gardens. For descriptions of the projects funded under NPCI, see the PCA website at http://www.nps.gov/plants/nfwf

Highly competitive, NPCI grant requests often far exceeded the average annual funding allotted to the program. Since 2009, for example, more than 100 NPCI pre-proposals were received annually and averaged $7,000,000 in requests, while the annual funding allocated to the Program averaged $400,000. The direct Congressional appropriation of Federal funding to the Foundation remains at about the same level as in previous years (see chart).

*Total Congressional appropriations of Federal funding from involved agencies to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation over the past eight years in relation to funds allocated to the Native Plant Conservation Initiative Program. Data from NFWF.*

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service liaison to the Plant Conservation Alliance will work with the Foundation to obtain archival information on projects that were funded under the Program. To assist in ensuring that our archives are complete, we would appreciate if NPCI Program grantees could assist us by providing information about your endeavors that were funded under this Program. Please include the funding year, a project title, and any summaries, reports, or other outcomes that stemmed from the project to:

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If you have comments or questions regarding the termination of the Program, please contact the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation directly:

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