



Sophia Siskel

Chair, Non-governmental Organizations Committee

Plant Conservation Alliance ■ 1000 Lake Cook Road ■ Glencoe, IL 60022

September 30, 2013

Donald J. McGrath, Chairman of the Board
Jeff Trandahl, Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
1133 Fifteenth St., N.W., Suite 1100
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: Native Plant Conservation Initiative

Dear Mr. McGrath and Mr. Trandahl:

As chair of the Plant Conservation Alliance Non-governmental Organizations Committee, a conservation consortium that works collectively to solve the problems of native plant extinction and native habitat restoration, I am writing to document my disappointment regarding the decision of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Board to dissolve the Native Plant Conservation Initiative (NPCI) grant program. This decision eliminates one of the few sources of funding for plant conservation efforts.

The NPCI grant program addressed the conservation, maintenance, rehabilitation, and restoration of native plants and their ecosystems on a national level. Projects addressed priorities established by the federal agencies that provide funds to NFWF (the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the USDA Forest Service) within at least one of six focal areas for plant conservation—partnerships, education, restoration, research, sustainability, and creating data linkages.

The NPCI program has attracted highly competitive, scientifically rigorous applications—more than 100 grant requests annually over the past two decades. Since 1995, 315 native plant projects have been funded with a \$7.2 million dollar federal investment. This federal funding leveraged nearly \$11.9 million in matching funds from other sources—resulting in nearly a 165% return on the initial federal investment. With an annual budget of approximately \$400,000 per year, the NPCI was able to provide modest but extremely significant budget support to numerous botanical researchers in support of significant efforts to address the protection of rare plants and native plant species, threats posed by invasive species, and the preservation of flora critical to the habitat and survival of a variety of animal species. **I attach testimony from 32 PCA partners as to the positive outcomes of the NPCI program.**

As you know, plants are not an optional component of our ecosystem. They provide the habitat—food, cover, nesting areas, and more—for the planet's wildlife. They provide critical ecosystem services, including provisioning of food and water, regulation of atmosphere, floods, drought,

support for soil formation, pollution filtering and carbon sequestration. Yet despite their critically important role, plants receive less than 2% of federal research funding for biological sciences.

Plant conservation activities are inseparable from the work of NFWF on other species. The decision to terminate support for the NPCI not only removes one of the few reliable sources of support for plant conservation, but also takes us backward in our efforts to convey the need for a successful holistic approach to wildlife preservation.

I am grateful to Claude Gascon, who met last week with my colleague, Dr. Greg Mueller, Vice President of Science for the Chicago Botanic Garden, and me to discuss the NPCI program and the future for plant conservation at NFWF. We are hopeful that we can work with him and NFWF on the following:

- Suggesting “language” for NFWF RFP’s that can ensure that native plant conservation is embedded in NFWF’s numerous geographical theaters of investment;
- Engaging in NFWF plans for work in the Northern Great Plains (this area is a place of particular strength for the Chicago Botanic Garden’s science program);
- Encourage the plant conservation community to apply for funding through the Hurricane Sandy Coastal Resiliency Competitive Grant program to undertake plant-based research that will enable the program to meet its goals;
- Encourage the plant conservation community to develop plant-based research to inform restoration efforts as part of the Gulf Environmental Benefit Fund programs.

We would also like to advocate that NFWF hire a botanist (or partner with a botanist) to review proposals. A botanist is also required to assess plant science investments, including those from NPCI. Plant restoration often requires a different time-horizon for evaluation than the efforts devoted to animals, and experts are needed in this evaluation.

I sincerely hope that the dialogue we are beginning offers the opportunity for a new partnership between PCA organizations and NFWF.

Sincerely,



Sophia Siskel
President and CEO
Chicago Botanic Garden
1000 Lake Cook Road
Glencoe, IL 60022

Cc: Claude Gascon, Executive Vice President, Science, Education, and Programs
Dan Ashe, Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Neil Kornze, Principal Deputy Director, Bureau of Land Management
Members of the Plant Conservation Alliance NGO Committee

PLANT CONSERVATION ALLIANCE REPLIES

Please include the **American Herbal Products Association** on these letters. **Michael McGuffin, President, MMcguffin@ahpa.org.**

Atlanta Botanical Garden. Please include the Atlanta Botanical Garden in the list of signatories on the letters of support for NPCI. Although the Atlanta Botanical Garden has not received funding through the NPCI, we have received other funds through the NFWF. These grants have allowed us to outplant more than 10,000 rare plants into restored wetland habitats in Georgia, to restore riparian plant communities and rare plants in highly visible, high impact natural areas in metro Atlanta, and provide service learning opportunities for more than 50 undergraduate students at Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, and Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta, among other K-12 students at schools around Atlanta. Funds for native plant conservation from the NFWF are critical for continued success of our conservation work. The NPCI is an essential part of the NFWF set of funding opportunities. **Jennifer Cruse-Sanders, Ph.D., Vice President for Science and Conservation, JSanders@atlantabotanicalgarden.org.**

Arboretum at Flagstaff. In response to the email from Kathryn Kennedy of the CPC, yes, please sign us onto each of the letters you are sending in support of the NPCI. Also, here is a paragraph that outlines the impact of CPC's funding. The Arboretum at Flagstaff has accomplished significant rare plant survey work with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Native Plant Conservation Initiative. These projects have led to the documentation of new populations and a better understanding of existing population dynamics ranging from alpine to arid-land species. Resources for studying and monitoring of endangered and sensitive plant species are themselves rare and elimination of this program represents a significant loss in terms of much needed work that can be accomplished. During this time of climate change, it is imperative that we not forget the lesser known and understood plant species that bolster our current level of biodiversity. **Lynne Nemeth, Executive Director, lynne.nemeth@thearb.org.**

Betty Ford Alpine Gardens. NPCI funding has supported the work of the American Public Gardens Association through the Environmental track at the national meeting. **Nicola, nicola@bettyfordalpinegardens.org.**

Please include **Biota of North America Program (BONAP)** to the letters. **Dr. John Kartesz, Director, john_kartesz@yahoo.com.**

At **Botanic Gardens Conservation International U.S.**, NPCI funding has supported work on multiple research projects, including the development of new conservation protocols for threatened oak species native to the United States and the critical evaluation of plant conservation capacity and progress in the U.S. Without this funding these projects would not have taken place, and the information gained from them about critically threatened species and our ability to care for them would not be available. **Andrea T. Kramer Ph.D., Executive Director, andrea.kramer@bgci.org.**

Botanical Society of America. The Botanical society will endorse each of the letters. **Pamela Diggle, President, Pamela.Diggle@Colorado.EDU.**

The **California Native Plant Society** has been funded multiple times for extremely important work surveying rare plant populations in the BLM managed California deserts just as the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan was being created, as well as supporting a critical vegetation mapping project in the northern Sierra Nevada Foothills, an area under extreme development pressure. We depend on NFWF and the NPCI to support critical native plant research in California; there are scant other resources of this magnitude for this work. **Josie Crawford, Education Program Director, jcrawford@cnps.org.**

The **Center For Plant Conservation** has received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Native Plant Conservation Initiative for several projects that have facilitated communication and efficient work among conservation partners, developed a training program to improve quality of work, conduct analyses that allowed priority setting for ex-situ seed banking, and help defray expenses of actual seed collection and banking of seed of imperiled species to support high priority recovery and reintroduction work articulated in federal recovery plans and forest management plans. Briefly a synopsis of our NPCI grants and their national impact follows: The Center for Plant Conservation has received funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Native Plant Conservation Initiative for several projects that have facilitated communication and efficient work among conservation partners, developed a training program to improve quality of work, conduct analyses that allowed priority setting for ex-situ seed banking, and help defray expenses of actual seed collection and banking of seed of imperiled species to support high priority recovery and reintroduction work articulated in federal recovery plans and forest management plans. Briefly a synopsis of our NPCI grants and their national impact follows:

Plant Conservation Training Program. A grant supported the initial collaborative development of the curriculum of CPC's very highly rated week long Plant Conservation Training program (over 90% highly recommended rating). The development phase NPCI supported was the catalyst for workforce training that has significantly advanced professional confidence, networking and efficiency. As a result of this careful curriculum development the training team has now successfully provided this training at low cost 5 times in 4 different states that are priorities for plant conservation action (CA, HI, CO, and AZ) and provided training in best practices with back up resources and contacts to **over 150 professional biologists**, both starting out and mid career, who work with imperiled plants. **We have more requests to provide this training than we can raise funds to provide services**—and currently are planning for 2 more sessions in CA and the Appalachian region. Several students have taken the course more than once. Students have stayed in touch and asked CPC to develop more extended training sessions for several of the topics.

Online Plant Conservation Directory. A grant years ago assisted initial development and a second grant more recently funded an update of the Center for Plant Conservation's Plant Conservation Directory created to facilitate networking and provide access to accurate and specific contacts to provide information and partners to further work in plant conservation. It listed agency contact information State and Federal, as well as ngo partners working in plant conservation on a state by state basis. Additional funding more recently supported converting the directory to an online searchable resource rather than a paper publication, and expanding the variety of entries to include conservation experts, and links to state and federal legislation regulating listed plant species. It is a web resource that has received copious praise and thanks from users, and **received 22,000 visits per year at our last analytical report.**

Evaluating Priorities for Seed Banking on Forest Service Lands. This grant supported a national data call and intentional outreach to determine existing seed banked material of conservation priority species that occur on US Forest Service Lands. The study determined species for which seed banking had been achieved from FS populations, or nearby populations, and which

species had no known seed banking done to secure ex-situ resources for needed research and restoration. It allowed both CPC and the Service to set appropriate priorities for future work and to develop plans and a later proposal to begin banking the highest priority species.

Ex-situ Conservation of Seed from imperiled species on Federal Lands. The need for seed banking of priority imperiled species across federal lands is high, and CPC has the workforce in place to assist. While the funding available is very small, funding from NPCI at least allowed CPC to get started collecting 39 of these species on Forest Service lands. A later increment of funding (Phase II) has supported a project not yet completed that will allow us to collect and additional 15 species. **Loss of funding for this partnership program, little though it may be, was a valuable contribution that incentivized matching funds and grew valuable partnerships. Its loss will impede progress in meeting critical seed banking needed in the face of challenges to these vulnerable species from climate change.**

Imperiled Plant Pollinator Web Resource (current project not yet completed). Lack of information about floral visitors and effective pollinators of imperiled plants impedes species management and recovery. CPC is creating a web resource listing pollinators and scientific references for 750 imperiled plants, including 362 federally listed or candidate species. If unknown, the project will identify research needed. If identified, it will be immediately useful to maintain healthy pollinator populations and help advance plant species recovery. A credible centralized resource will save research time for federal and state regulatory agencies evaluating and regulating pesticide use, conducting Section 7 consultations on direct and indirect effects for plant species, and making decisions on listing and delisting needs and criteria. Documenting our knowledge level now while pollinators are still predominantly present and identifiable will support planning for future management and restoration needs under changed habitat and range conditions. **Kathryn Kennedy, Executive Director, Kathryn.Kennedy@mobot.org.**

Desert Botanical Garden. NPCI funding has supported several projects carried out by the Desert Botanical Garden. Most recently, a full scale analysis of the endemic plants of Arizona was conducted. The products of this work have been shared with all federal land management agencies in the state to assist in conservation management decisions. The need for funding of projects such as this cannot be overstated. **Ken Schutz, kschutz@dbg.org.**

Florida and Southeast Exotic Pest Plant Councils have agreed to sign on to your letters to the stated agencies, elected officials and grant organization requesting the continuation of the Native Plant Conservation Initiative (NPCI) Grant Program. We appreciate and support the actions you are taking to preserve this program.) **Karen Brown, Board Member, kpbrown@ufl.edu.**

Florida Native Plant Society. We certainly support the intent of your letters. I have been instructed by our Board of Directors to draft our own letter, which can stand alone or be in combination with your sign-on letter if appropriate. **Eugene Kelly, Policy Chair, g.m.kelly@comcast.net.**

Gardens of the Blue Ridge. As a native plant lover, grower and enthusiast for all of my life please do include me and my business on these correspondences to the powers that be encouraging them to continue funding towards the efforts of the Chicago Botanic Garden. My great grandfather started a native plant nursery, Gardens of the Blue Ridge, in 1892. We are now the 4th generation to run the business. I also remember my grandfather talking about delivering plants to Chicago Botanic Garden years ago. Through the years I have seen many species disappear and without adequate funding to preserve our native plants gene pool, we could loose intricate parts of our

ecosystems. Without living, breathing, growing plants we would not survive. **Edward J. Fletcher, efletcher@StrategicSourcingInc.net.**

Institute for Applied Ecology. Thank you very much for organizing this letter campaign in response to NFWF's announced termination of the NPCI program. Please add Institute for Applied Ecology to the list of signators on the letters. Here is an example of how NPCI funding has been leveraged by IAE for conservation actions: Funding through NPCI has enabled the Institute for Applied Ecology to restore endangered plant species, including Nelson's checkermallow, Kincaid's lupine, Willamette daisy and Bradshaw's lomatium, and move them toward removal from the endangered species list, all while engaging multiple partners and school kids in meaningful conservation actions. **Tom Kaye, Executive Director, tom@appliedeco.org.**

The **Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission** has not been the recipient of a NFWF Native Plant Conservation Initiative (NPCI) Grant, yet we were planning to apply, and are strongly supportive of this very necessary program. We hope it does not come to an end. Kentucky gladeceess (*Leavenworthia exigua, var. laciniata*) is a state endemic known only from the Louisville metropolitan area. As you may expect urban development is threatening the existence of this plant and it is proposed for listing as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. We were considering applying for a NPCI grant in partnership with Louisville Metro government and 21st Century Parks (a local non-profit) for Kentucky gladeceess habitat rehabilitation (invasive plant and cedar removal) and for seed recovery. We hope the NPCI grant program does not end. **Donald S. Dott Jr., Executive Director, Don.Dott@ky.gov.**

Lyon Arboretum. Happy to do this! **Christopher P. Dunn, Director, cpdunn@hawaii.edu.**

Meadowview. We were funded by NFWF, I think via PCA, in 2007 with a grant to reintroduce the federally endangered mountain sweet pitcher plant, *Sarracenia jonesii*, to the Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC. We simply couldn't have done the project without the grant support. Because of grant support we not only made a significant difference in the number of populations of this endangered species, but also accomplished meaningful objectives with local summer camp students on the project. **Phil Seridan Ph.D., Director, meadowview@pitcherplant.org.**

The **Midwest Invasive Plant Network** is willing to sign on to the letters. We have never received NCPI funding, but we support the program and your efforts to have it reinstated. **Katherine M. Howe, Midwest Invasive Plant Network Coordinator, Purdue University, howek@purdue.edu.**

Missouri Botanical Garden. In the past, the program has funded seed-banking projects, endangered plant recovery research, reintroductions, and educational outreach; themes that are critical to fulfilling our mission and supporting the growing conservation arm of MBG. **Matthew Albrecht, Ph.D., Conservation & Sustainable Development, Matthew.Albre3cht@mobot.org.**

Of course, the Missouri Botanical Garden supports this effort. We thank you for taking the initiative on this, and for giving us the opportunity to lend our support. My specific program within the garden has not been the recipient of NFWF monies, as it is a brand new initiative, and thus I myself am unable to write a supporting narrative at this time. Please do let me know if there is any other thing I can do to be of assistance with this endeavor. **Ginger Allington, Ginger.Allington@mobot.org.**

National Tropical Botanical Garden. you can definitely count NTBG in as a cosigner on these letters. **Chipper Wichman, Director and CEO, wichman@ntbg.org.**

The **New England Wild Flower Society** would like to sign on to the letters. Although we have not received funding from NPCI in some time, we strongly support funding for plant conservation efforts. **William E. Brumback, Conservation Director, bbrumback@newenglandwild.org.**

Pollinator Partnership. Laurie Davies Adams has asked me to follow-up with you regarding NPCI funding. The Pollinator Partnership supports the efforts being made to reinstate this funding and should be added to any formal support letters. **Mary Byrne Rager, Plant Ecologist, mr@pollinator.org.**

Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. (Lucinda McDade, We are good to go on signing off.)
Lucinda A. McDade, Ph.D., Executive Director, Judith B. Friend Director of Research.
lmcdade@rsabg.org.

Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter of the California Native Plant Society. The Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter of the California Native Plant Society would be happy to sign on with the letters going out to NFWF, DOI, USDA, Environmental Grantmakers, etc. regarding the elimination of the NPCI by NFWF. The Native Plant Conservation Initiative has funded several important projects for our Southern California plants and we are upset that this dedicated source of funding for on-the-ground conservation work for native plants, specifically, is not a priority for the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. We understand that our state office has signed but want to add our support as well. Thank you, **Kathryn A. Kramer, Ph.D., Principal, SoCal Biology, socalbiology@gmail.com.**

The **Santa Barbara Botanic Garden** will sign on. **Steve Windhager, Ph.D., Executive Director, swindhager@sbbg.org.**

Sister Mary Grace Burns Arboretum of Georgian Court University (Lakewood, NJ). Please add as a signatory to the letters. **Michael F. Gross, Ph.D., Associate Provost for Academic Program Development, Professor of Biology, grossm@georgian.edu.**

State Botanical Garden of Georgia. NFWF funding has been instrumental in our organizing and coordinating a statewide grassroots network of volunteers called the 'Botanical Guardians' who (1) serve as stewards for 21 imperiled rare habitats under power-line right-of-ways, (2) help locate and monitor lost rare plant populations, and (3) monitor the status of known locations of rare plants. [Referred to on the PCA website as: **Volunteers Protecting Our Natural Heritage (GA)**]. Earlier, the State Botanical Garden of Georgia received NFWF funding for creating the *Field Guide to the Rare Plants of Georgia*, (but that does not seem to be from NPCI funds). **K. Wilf Nicholls, Ph.D., Director, wilfnich@uga.edu.**

Tallgrass Prairie Center, University Of Northern Iowa. Please attach our organization's name to the letter(s). **Gregory Houseal, gregory.houseal@uni.edu.**

University of Texas at Austin. Please include our organization, The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center – University Of Texas at Austin on each of the letters you intend to send to

agencies, elected officials and grant organizations. We are saddened to hear of the decision of the Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Board's decision to dissolve the Native Plant Conservation Initiative (NPCI) Grant Program. As you noted in your correspondence to the NPCI, this decision in essence eliminates one of the few federal sources of funding for plant conservation. It is particularly troubling to see such a great loss of important funding for plant conservation now, as catastrophic weather and global warming impose even greater burdens on already at-risk native plant communities throughout the nation. **Karen H. Clary, Ph.D., Senior Program Manager, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, kclary@wildflower.org.**

University of Washington Botanic Gardens. NPCI funding has been critical for launching and sustaining a successful rare plant monitoring and native seed banking program at University of Washington Botanic Gardens. Begun in 2001 with a NPCI grant, the rare plant monitoring project has engaged over 300 volunteers who have monitored more than 800 rare native plant populations throughout Washington State. This program would not have gotten off the ground without the critically needed funds that the NPCI grant program provides for native plant conservation, one of the few resources available to plant conservationists in the country. These grants have also leveraged funding from private foundations and as a result, seeds from over 100 species of rare native plants reside in a secure seed bank. **Sarah E. Reichard, reichard@uw.edu.**

Waimea Valley. Waimea Valley would be glad to participate in the sign on letter. I believe we were one of the first Center for Plant Conservation participants to join in the Native Plant Conservation Initiative Grant Program. We were then known as the Waimea Arboretum and Botanical Garden. The Center for Plant Conservation has been funding 11 Hawaii native endangered plant species growing at Waimea Valley for the past 20 years. Today, with a lot of dedication & hard work from staff we have had good successes for perpetuating the diversity of these plant species - *Abutilon menzeisii*, *Achyranthes splendens* var. *rotundata*, *Gardenia brighamii*, *Hibiscus brackenridgei* spp. *Mokuleianus*, *Kokia cookei*, *schiedea kaalae*, and *Pritchardia munroi*. I hope we can continue the work set before us and finish the race. **Josephine Hoh, Botanical Group Manager, JHoh@waimeavalley.net.**

The **Wyoming Native Plant Society** would like to sign onto the letters in support of the NPCI Grant Program. Although the WyNPS has not received funding from NPCI, our organization includes many agency and academia botanists who benefit from the work supported by NPCI. **Dorothy E. Tuthill, Associate Director, Biodiversity Institute, University of Wyoming, DTuthill@uwyo.edu.**