

CoNPS 2022 Conservation Committee Annual Report

The CoNPS Conservation Committee has two major goals. The first is to provide articles for the Conservation Corner column in each of the quarterly publications of *Aquilegia*, and the second is to provide public comment on issues that affect Colorado native plants and habitats.

At the present time the committee is co-chaired by Linda Smith, Brad Klafehn and Mo Ewing and has about 20 members who have volunteered to help with public comment and 12 who have volunteered to write articles for *Aquilegia*.

This year we contributed four articles to *Aquilegia*:

Winter Issue: “Fens in Colorado—Their Vulnerabilities and the Threats They Face” by Gay Austin

Spring Issue: “Discovering iNaturalist” by Mo Ewing

Summer Issue: “Trends in Alpine Ecology: The Role of Microclimates in Determining Alpine Plant Response to Climate Change” by Miles A. Moore and Laurel M. Brigham

Fall Issue: “Rare Plants Still Under Threat” by Brad Klafehn

The public comment that we make are of two types, public comment that we write on behalf of CoNPS, and public comment that we make by signing on to comments that are written by other agencies.

We wrote the following comments on behalf of CoNPS:

In January we filed protests against Bureau of Land Management’s June 2022 oil and gas leasing sale which endangered rare plants in multiple leases across Colorado. Of the 119 potential tracts under consideration, BLM offered only 6. Just three were bid on, and of those, only one was in a Potential Conservation Area identified by CNHP (80 acres in Pawnee Grasslands West PCA).

In February Denise Larson wrote comments on the Fish and Wildlife Service’s Draft Recovery Plan for Parachute Beardtongue. CoNPS was the sole substantive commentator. On August 17, 2022, USFWS issued the final recovery plan (available at <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/7099>), which accepted about half of our recommendations.

In May, Gay Austin wrote a botanical report on a dispute between a private developer and the town of Twin Lakes about an alleged diversion of a stream which affected some biologically important fens.

In December, Brad Klafehn, with help from Susan Campbell, provided comments to the Colorado Oil and Gas Commission on the detrimental effects of ozone on native plants, as part of a petition for rulemaking on the cumulative impacts of ozone. The Commission agreed to hold a stakeholders workshop in preparation for future rulemaking.

Over the course of this year we also signed on to the comments of other agencies regarding native plants:

We signed on to a letter supporting President Biden's opposition to Investor-State Dispute Settlements in the North America Trade Agreement Pact which are used by countries to attack one another's climate policies.

In April we signed on to a letter to several U.S. Congressional committees to provide funding to U.S. Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service to recover threatened and endangered species and restore their habitats on our nation's public lands.

In April we also signed on to a letter commenting on Willow Creek Land Exchange. A Non-Federal Party was proposing to convey one parcel of land containing approximately 50.23 acres to the United States in exchange for one parcel of National Forest System land containing approximately 6.87 acres.

And in November, we signed on to a letter to protect old growth forests in the U.S.