

2011 NPSNM Grant Awards

By Pam McBride, Recording Secretary, NPSNM

This year, we had nine grant proposals to consider and \$5000 with which to fund them. There were some tough decisions to be made and the Board of Directors rated grants based on whether they met the goals of the Native Plant Society and whether proposals clearly expressed how project outcomes would lead to the preservation of, increased knowledge of, or encouragement of the appropriate use of native plants. After careful consideration the Board voted to fund the following grants:

William R. Norris, professor of ecology and evolutionary biology, Western NM University. **Flora Neomexicana III: Dichotomous Keys for Sedges in the genus *Carex***. The \$1,000.00 granted to Dr. Norris will help him to pay for expenses accrued during research at New Mexico State University and the University of New Mexico herbaria as he prepares dichotomous keys for the 80 species of New Mexico *Carex*. The keys will be ready for insertion in Flora Neomexicana III by December 31, 2011. The book will hold keys to all known genera of vascular plants in New Mexico.

The Indian Pueblo Cultural Center. **Pueblo House Living Landscape**. The \$750 grant will help pay for the purchase of native plants and seeds to establish a living landscape that will be used to teach people about the use of wild plants as food and medicine and the role of native plants in the preservation of the cultures and environment of the Pueblos. Programming developed that focuses on the living landscape will be the focal point of the established food ways and agriculture program known as Field to Feast as well as summer camps where children will work directly with the landscape.

Audubon New Mexico. **Restoring Native Riparian Plants at Broad Canyon Ranch**. This grant of \$700 will help purchase native trees for the restoration of riparian habitat at Broad Canyon Ranch, about 15 miles north of Las Cruces. The ranch was designated as a New Mexico State Park in January of 2009 and Audubon has partnered with New Mexico State Parks and has received another grant from TogetherGreen to remove invasive plants and barbed wire fencing and to plant willows and cottonwoods in the wettest areas of the property. To complement these activities, NPSNM grant money will be used to plant natives like Velvet ash and New Mexico olive on the edges of the former floodplain in areas that are not quite as wet. Each planting area will be secured with fencing to exclude herbivores. Their goal is to engage 150 new volunteers to undertake the planting and other conservation efforts at the ranch.

Mare Nazaire, PhD candidate, **The Geographic and Ecological Basis of Species Richness: Diversification in Western NA *Mertensia* (Boraginaceae)**. The \$1,000 awarded to Ms. Nazaire will help cover costs of collecting voucher specimens of *Mertensia* and lab materials to extract and sequence DNA from collected plant material. Species richness is affected by evolution and ecological opportunities. The topographic, edaphic, and climatic complexity of the Rocky Mountains serve to create biotic niches giving rise to a rich diversity of *Mertensia* species. This study will examine whether niche conservatism or niche evolution has played a greater role in diversity. It will potentially provide a better understanding of undescribed diversity in New Mexico, the dynamics that drive plant diversification, and the effects of anthropogenic climate change.

Upper Gila Watershed Alliance. Travel Planning on the Gila National Forest. The NPSNM has funded the Alliance for the last two years to review motor vehicle use maps developed by the Gila National Forest that propose routes for both road and off-road vehicle use. They have hired a Geographic Information System specialist who has found grave flaws in proposed routes because they would have adversely impacted threatened and endangered species habitat, streams, old growth forests, and more. The Gila National Forest released the draft Environmental Impact Statement in January of this year and the Alliance will use the \$900 NPSNM 2011 grant money to analyze the four to five maps of proposed route system alternatives by contracting for further GIS services.

Parkview Elementary. Parkview Elementary Outdoor Classroom. As a host school for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife program *Schoolyard Habitat and Outdoor Classroom Course*, and with help from Friends of The Bosque del Apache and their program, *Mapping the Rio*, the school developed a model to create an outdoor classroom based on the Rio Grande watershed. The model in the school courtyard of the Rio Grande riverbed and its tributaries will serve to move water away from the school building and into a connecting retention pond during heavy rainfall. The NPSNM grant of \$650 will be used to purchase native plants for landscaping to replicate various New Mexico ecosystems. A pollinator garden is also part of the plans. The goal is to integrate outdoor activities with the district curriculum and make the outdoor classroom an integral part of daily lessons.