

## Project Year-End Summary Report 2021

Title of Project: Launching the ABQ Backyard Refuge Certification Program

*Begin answering in the shaded box right beside or below each question and it will expand to accommodate as you type. Use up to a total of two pages. More detailed presentations, articles or posters are welcome separately\* (See final instructions at the end of this form.)*

1. Organization name or Individual who received the grant: Friends of Valle de Oro National Wildlife Refuge

2. Amount of Grant: \$ 1,000.00

4. Was additional outside funding obtained? (check box that applies) Yes  No   
Other funding source(s) if you checked "yes." La Meristema Fund at the Albuquerque Community Foundation

5. Briefly, how was the grant money from the Carter Conservation Fund used?

This grant provided the seed funding for the backyard certification process by covering the cost of metal signs and stickers for 100 participants. Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District negotiated a special rate with Bernalillo County for printing the signs at a reduced rate of \$8 each. The certification stickers for each sign cost ~\$2. This funding helped us prevent socioeconomic status from being a barrier to engagement by making the certification fee optional. These certified habitat signs have been a valuable incentive for participation and have also served to promote the program; multiple participants learned about the program via neighbors' signs and the stickers showing the certification year (& featuring backyard species) have generated enthusiasm.

6. Write an abstract or summary of the activities performed and the progress that was made this year on your project. Save any conclusions, lessons learned, and benefits achieved for the final sections, 7&8.

We launched the certification process in March 2021 and have certified just over 50 acres with 84 individual and business participants as of November 29th. When certifying, we ask those who can afford it to donate to help offset the costs for others and have received incredible support from our participants.

Our partners at the University of New Mexico's R.H. Mallory Center for Community Geography have produced a more-than-human mapping platform to help us and our partners find areas across the city for conversion to native plant habitat. We are using this platform to guide our future habitat restoration and citizen science projects with partners while tracking the program's progress and focusing our recruitment efforts.

We have given virtual presentations promoting the program through Oasis Lifelong Learning, Bachechi Open Space, and Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District. We are actively working with our partners to certify existing habitat areas as demonstration areas for the program and working with both city and county open space divisions to integrate new native plant habitats into other properties such as parks and community centers.

7. State how your project furthers a Native Plant Society mission area. Pick the best fitting area: achieves plant or ecological education, contributes to conservation/restoration of native plants and habitats, adds to botanical research, or promotes appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land and/or wildlife.

The overall program has elements that address three of the four Native Plant Society mission areas. We work with the City and other partners to offer ecological education programs and work with individuals, community groups and governmental entities to grow native habitat across the city. The Carter Conservation Fund grant directly supported our program goal and the NPS mission area of promoting the use of native plants to conserve water and land for supporting urban wildlife. We are actively working with our participants and partners to spread the idea that everyone can contribute to urban conservation by adding native plants to their landscapes at any scale.

8. State any other conclusions. Include any lessons learned that would assist others. What benefit to you, the community or the environment resulted or do you hope will result from your use of this grant?

Thus far, most participants are those that already have habitat in their yards and want to expand the habitat potential of their space. Our challenge is to recruit those new to the concept. Once the pandemic recedes, our goal is to work with our partners to integrate more in-person educational opportunities for both beginners and experienced native plant gardeners. We are also working to develop online methods of communicating the value of native plants for supporting wildlife.

The plant list developed by our Native Plant Society partner committee in 2019 has generated much enthusiasm in many participants. Many beginners, though, seem overwhelmed by the choices and we are working with partners to use the list to develop small plant palettes for those who are just getting started.

One major lesson learned is that those people for whom native plant habitat gardening is a new concept very much want an expert to visit their yard to talk about habitat and offer ideas. We are currently launching a Neighborhood Ambassador program with the goal of creating an educated volunteer corps to do these one-on-one consultations.

Our hope is that the certification signs and stickers provided by this grant continue to promote the program and attract future participants while spreading the concept of sharing space with wildlife through native plant gardening and wildlife-friendly yard management. This seed funding for launching our program has allowed us to begin growing a mosaic of habitat for people and our wild neighbors across our area.

## Final Instructions

**Please send your completed form in MS Word as an email attachment to [cartergrantapps@gmail.com](mailto:cartergrantapps@gmail.com) by November 31.**

*\* To remain in good standing for any future funding from the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, plan to write an article (600-1000 words, illustrations welcome) for our newsletter, or create and present a poster at our annual state conference, or send us a copy of or link to a published article connected with the past year's work, or work with a local chapter of NPSNM to make an educational and visual presentation to a group.*

*What are your intentions in this regard? We would like to write an article for your newsletter and potentially present at your next conference.*

*Our next state conference is scheduled for August, 2022 in Albuquerque. Contact our Albuquerque chapter if you wish to contribute in that way. Write to [cartergrantapps@gmail.com](mailto:cartergrantapps@gmail.com) at any time with questions.*