Project Year-End Summary Report

Title of Project: New Mexico Rare Plant Watch

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 and a half pages for questions 1-8. More detailed presentations, a final report, articles or posters are welcome separately (See final instructions at the end of this form.)*

1. Organization name or Individual who received the grant: EMNRD was the original applicant for the Rare Plant Watch project, but the Institute for Applied Ecology received funding to complete the work.

2. Amount of Grant: $16,497 Board Funds + $4,000 Carter Funds = $20,497.00

4. Was additional outside funding obtained? (check box that applies) Yes ☐ No X
Other funding source(s) if you checked "yes."

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

Funding provided by the NPSNM State Board and the Carter Conservation Fund supported personnel time dedicated to the coordination, implementation, and continued development of the New Mexico Rare Plant Watch Program. Staff responsibilities included recruiting and onboarding volunteers, developing training materials, coordinating survey assignments, providing technical assistance, and communicating with participants throughout the field season.

Funding also supported the maintenance and improvement of the Rare Plant Watch database, including tracking volunteer participation, managing survey assignments, and organizing submitted data for review and quality assurance. Additional staff time was allocated towards developing educational resources, preparing volunteer newsletters, and organizing training opportunities to equip participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to conduct accurate rare plant surveys and ensuring they stayed safe while doing so.

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.)

The New Mexico Rare Plant Watch program is a community science initiative dedicated to improving our understanding of rare plant populations throughout New Mexico. Through the participation of trained volunteers, the program seeks to revisit historically documented rare plant occurrences, assess their current status, and collect updated information to support conservation planning and land management decisions.

During the 2026 field season, program staff coordinated volunteer surveys across New Mexico, provided training and technical assistance, and facilitated the collection of standardized field observations. Volunteers documented rare plant occurrences, habitat conditions, population characteristics, and potential threats, providing valuable information on species and locations that may not have been surveyed in decades. Surveys where target species were not relocated also contributed important information to help guide future monitoring and conservation efforts

In addition to field activities, the program continued to strengthen its volunteer network, improve survey coordination and data management procedures, and expand educational resources for participants. Survey submissions undergo quality assurance and review before being shared with conservation partners, helping to ensure that the information collected is accurate, consistent, and useful for future conservation decisions.

These efforts contribute to a growing body of information on New Mexico's rare flora while demonstrating the value of community participation in addressing critical gaps in botanical knowledge.

7. How does your project further a Native Plant Society mission area, namely: *plant or ecological education; conservation/restoration of native plants and/or their habitats; adds to botanical research; promotes appropriate use of native plants to conserve water, land and/or wildlife.*

The New Mexico Rare Plant Watch program directly advances the conservation of native plants and their habitats while promoting ecological education and contributing to botanical knowledge. Many of New Mexico's rare plant populations are known primarily from the historical records, some of which haven't been updated or revisited in several decades. Without current information on their distribution, abundance, and habitat conditions, conservation practitioners and land managers face significant challenges in assessing threats and establishing appropriate management priorities.

By mobilizing trained volunteers to revisit these rare plant occurrences, Rare Plant Watch helps bridge critical information gaps and provides conservation partners with up to date data that has been verified by boots on the ground. These data can inform future monitoring priorities or influence decisions on habitat management, compliance, and conservation planning.

In total, 112 volunteers signed up for the program and 95 assignments were requested and assigned, 87 of which have been completed and submitted to date. Over 30 unique taxa were surveyed and an additional 8 new rare plant populations were identified and surveyed by volunteers, further adding to our known pool of rare plant populations across the state of New Mexico. Program participants reported a total of 292 training hours and 421 hours spent completing surveys.

The program also fosters public awareness in native plant conservation by engaging with volunteers from all walks of life. Through training, field experience, and continued

collaboration with program staff, volunteers develop botanical identification skills, gain a deeper understanding of New Mexico's native flora, while actively participating in its protection.

8. Any other conclusions, lessons learned, benefits to you, the community or the environment hopefully result from your work as assisted by this grant.

The 2026 field season reinforced the important role that trained community scientists can play in a conservation setting. With appropriate guidance and support, even volunteers entirely new to the field can contribute meaningful field data. The process is both inexpensive and extremely effective at covering large swaths of land, a specific challenge posed to land managers who may attempt to conduct these surveys themselves. That being said, this field season also highlighted the importance of maintaining accessible training resources, clear survey protocols, and regular, consistent communication with participants. The challenges posed to each volunteer were as diverse as the species they were surveying and without the guidance provided by our coordinator, volunteers may not have been nearly as effective at overcoming them. Providing ongoing support to volunteers is therefore essential to maintaining data quality and ensuring a positive experience for participants.

Additionally, improvements to the program's data management and volunteer coordination systems can also be made. By streamlining these processes, we can further support the long-term sustainability of the program by reducing the active time needed to manage Rare Plant Watch by its attendant staff.

The substantial support from NPSNM allowed this pilot year of Rare Plant Watch to be a success. The program we built this year will be the foundation of a sustainable community science program leading into the future. We, IAE and EMNRD, are looking forward and planning for the next steps of Rare plant Watch, including engaging with NPSNM and its chapters in the years to come.

Final Instructions

Please send your completed form as a PDF email attachment to cartergrantapps@gmail.com by November 1, 2026.

* *To remain in good standing for any future funding from the Native Plant Society of New Mexico, we ask that you educate our membership more fully in some way. This could be an article (250 words minimum, at least 1 high resolution illustration or photo) for our newsletter,* ***or*** *a paper or electronic copy or link to a published article connected with the past year's work,* ***or*** *by making an educational and visual presentation to one of our chapters. Contact information for our 7 area chapters is found on our website at www.npsnm.org under the Chapters tab.*

What are your intentions in this regard?

A representative from EMNRD, Kathleen Kline presented on the Rare Plant Watch program at the most recent Native Plant Society of New Mexico's annual meeting in Silver City. Additionally, an article about the program was written for IAE's monthly newsletter by

Restoration Ecologist, Ari Pepper, that you may use or adapt as you see fit; the article can be found here. Moreover, numerous high quality images of rare plant species have been submitted via our survey platform by our volunteers and can be made available upon request. A story about Rare Plant Watch field work, written by Sylvan Kaufman, NPSNM conservation committee chair, and Lee Regan, Albuquerque chapter member, was published in the most recent issue of the NPSNM newsletter. IAE would be happy to support further outreach upon request.

This year end report is submitted by (Type your name) Ari Pepper (IAE) and Katie Kline (EMNRD)

My typed name is equal to my handwritten signature in testifying to the accuracy and truth of this report to the best of my knowledge today.

eMail address aripepper@applied.eco.org

Date 10/26/26

Please contact us again at cartergrantapps@gmail.com if you have any questions or alternate suggestions.