

PENNSYLVANIA PLANT CONSERVATION NETWORK

A Model for Collaborative Conservation

Summer 2020

WHAT ARE OUR GOALS?

The goal is to collaborate on projects across the state, building partnerships to meaningfully advance native plant conservation in Pennsylvania.

Education

Outreach

Stewardship



HOW IT STARTED

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is mandated to ensure the long-term health, viability and productivity of the Commonwealth's forests and conserve native wild plants.

This has traditionally been in the form of policy and regulations, and some active management of State Forest Lands

In 2018, the Pennsylvania Plant Conservation Network was created to expand the scope of native plant conservation – shifting towards stewardship of rare, threatened, and endangered plants on private lands



WHO WE ARE

- PPCN Coordinator – Me, except today is my last day 😞 bye everyone, thanks for everything!
- A steering committee – Comprised of 11 botanical professionals from around the state
 - Academic institutions, Land Trusts, Botanic Gardens, Volunteer Organizations
- Volunteers and stakeholders

HOW ARE WE STRUCTURED

- Housed within The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program
- Overseen by the Bureau of Forestry
- We have a steering committee composed of internal staff and external partners
 - Steering committee helps set goals, draft policy document, etc
- Work groups are beginning to take shape
 - They report to the PPCN Coordinator, who shares progress with DCNR and Steering Committee



CURRENT STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS

- Species Level Work
 - *Euphorbia purpurea* (G3/SI)
 - *Paxistima canbyi* (G2/SI)
 - *Goodyera tessellata* (G5/SI)
- Habitat Level Work
 - Cave Hill (convergence of limestone & shale)
 - Serpentine Barrens
 - Fen Management



2019 PRIVATE LANDOWNER MINI-GRANT

In July 2019, the Pennsylvania Plant Conservation Network (PPCN) was awarded \$35,000 from the Environmental Stewardship Fund in order to pilot a mini-grant program in 2020 focusing on stewardship of rare, native plants on private lands in Pennsylvania.

Twenty applications were submitted totaling over \$300,000 in funding requests.

CASTILLEJA COCCINEA PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT, AND MONITORING

- Submitted by Penn State University
 - *Castilleja coccinea* (Indian paintbrush) is an herbaceous, root hemi-parasite that is threatened in Pennsylvania.
 - Protection, management, and monitoring of extant populations, as well as identification of suitable sites for reintroduction are paramount for its survival in the state
 - Penn state will work to upgrade protection at known sites, monitor and collect data, collect seeds, and produce a monitoring report.



SIMON'S OAK NODDING TRILLIUM PROTECTION

- Submitted by Brandywine Conservancy
 - There are at least two populations of *T. cernuum* in the Simon's Oak Farm woodland.
 - The primary threat to Simon's Oak Farm's *T. cernuum* is competition from invasive plant species and deer browse
 - Brandywine Conservancy will remove invasive species in close proximity to the *T. cernuum* and install deer exclusion fencing around known plant populations



JEWELLED SHOOTING STAR PROPAGATION

- Submitted by Manada Conservancy
 - The purpose of this project is to prepare the Manada Conservancy owned property to be a repository for the imperiled Jeweled Shooting Star.
 - Under the guidance of the PA Natural Heritage Program staff, a team of Manada Conservancy staff and volunteers will perform invasive species removal around the known population of the Shooting Star to help ensure its viability for the future.
 - The team will also collect seeds from this population. A Manada Conservancy volunteer experienced in native plant propagation, will care for the seeds and assist with planting when the time is appropriate.

DUFF PARK WILD PLANT SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT

- Submitted by Friends of Murrysville Parks
 - Duff Park, is a PADCNR designated Wild Plant Sanctuary and Old Growth Forest with many spring ephemerals and rare plants
 - Invasive plants are the primary threat to the native plants
 - Friends of Murrysville Parks will use the awarded funds to pay for one week of stewardship by PA Outdoor Corp



GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING INTERVENTION FOR NATIVE PLANTS OF CONSERVATION CONCERN

- Inspired by the policy document that guides the Georgia Plant Conservation Alliances work
- Developed over the course of 10 months, with the help of the PPCN steering committee, the Vascular Plant Technical Committee, and colleagues at the Bureau of Forestry
- This document strives to provide an overview of relevant techniques and considerations for enhancement of rare plant population viability and maintenance of genetic integrity.

RECOVERY PLANS

- We hope that species recovery plans will guide much of our active management work throughout the state
- We currently have 12 completed plans, with 4 additional plans on the way
- Recent recovery plans include “proposed ways for PPCN to get involved”



WHAT'S GOING WELL!

- People want to protect plants!
- Invested stakeholders
- Access to good data



THINGS WE STRUGGLE WITH

- It's a BIG state!
- Building relationships with private landowners is a S L O W process
- External communication
 - Highly centralized communication structure within DCNR
- Lack of staffing
- Diversity

MOVING FORWARD



Bureau of Forestry staff will administer the program and search for a new coordinator



Support more rare plant research



Work to engage a broad and diverse audience



Continue developing work groups and pushing forward on established projects