BOARD OF DIRECTORS
SPECIAL PLANNING CALL
JANUARY 9, 2021, 10:00 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

Attending: Gretchen Rupp, Maria Mantas, Karen Porter, Laurie Kurth, Robert Pal, Patrick Plantenberg, Beth Madden, Bob Person, Shannon Kimball, Elizabeth Bergstrom, Peter Lesica, Ryan Quire, Betty Kuropat.

INTRODUCTION - Gretchen

We all acknowledged last year that we have been keeping on the same way have for several years, or a few decades, but we recognize that may not be sufficient to keep us viable. Three big challenges are:

- We needed to replace a few Board Members in short order, which sometimes can be very difficult
- It’s difficult to recruit at the Chapter level to lead chores and activities, though people are generally available to “help out.”
- We have been budgeting for $10,000 or so in the red for a few years. Fortunately, fortuitous circumstances have provided extra income. We have not updated our revenue or membership fees for 15 years, so it is time.

REVIEW THE STATUS OF RECRUITING FOR SOON-TO-OPEN BOARD POSITIONS- Peter and Gretchen

Appointed Positions

- Newsletter Editor- Caroline Kurtz
  Jen Hintz Guse and her husband, Scott Guse, are excited to take on the Kelsey as a team. They have similar skills that Caroline and Eileen Chantos brought to the job. Scott will be mostly responsible for content and editing and Jen will do the graphics. They will bring good new energy. Caroline estimates she and Eileen each spend 12-20 hours/issue. That will likely be more like 30 for Scott and Jen. We discussed bumping up their fee from $650 to $900 in our December meeting, but will wait to vote on free and appointment until our
spring meeting. Caroline shared with Jen some of the process in the Winter issue. The Guses will start with the Spring issue with Caroline consulting.

In the event that the June Kelseyia issue timing is difficult for Jen Hintz Guse as a field botanist, we discussed shifting the dates. Caroline pointed out that this could pose some difficulties. If a change is made, it would be easier for Maria to shift them forward. E.g. the Fall issue due date is October 10 instead of September 10. Later- Jen says she is fine to keep with the current schedule.

Caroline also thanks everyone that contributed to the Kelseyia volunteer issue. It spoke eloquently to what individuals can gain from the organization.

- Landscape Chair- Current VP, Ryan Quire will switch over to chair of the Landscape Committee. She is working on updating the Source Guide; when that is done she will start addressing where the committee should head. This will be an agenda item on the next regular board meeting. Ryan asks that everyone start gathering their thoughts on what the Landscape Committee should address next before that meeting.
- Robert Pal has been appointed to fill out Ryan’s Vice President position, starting this summer, through the end of her term in June 2022. Robert started botanizing in his native Hungary, is currently a professor specializing in restoration at Montana Tech, and a Calypso Chapter member where he has lead field trips and given programs.

**Nominated for 2 year Elected Positions to be on the June 2021 Ballot:**

- President- Patrick Plantenberg is glad to be back. He served 20 plus years as the Society Secretary.
- Treasurer- Laurie Kurth gave us a bit of a background...she is a native of Chicago and got her start in botany in the mid-west prairies followed by 30 years federal employment with the service Park Service and USFS. She found herself enjoying moving numbers around in her last job. Laurie is now retired in Frenchtown. A Clark Fork member is willing to help, not the same as Janet Simms as doing it currently. Peter has the info.
  .Laurie is starting to follow along with Shannon now, well before her term starts. Maria is looking forward to looking closely with Laurie.
- Western Director-at-Large – Kris Boyd, incumbent, will run again.

**2. NEW DUES STRUCTURE – Maria and Beth**

A lengthy discussion continued from our last two meetings. See appendix A for final structure. We motioned, seconded, and carried the structure in Appendix A (provided by Maria). Current and future lifetime members will not be asked to pay for a paper Kelseyia. The $1000 category was inspired by a recent $1000 donation by in memory of Virginia Vincent by her sister. Virginia was a founding member and her signature is on our 1987 Articles of Incorporation.
Later - An email dialogue followed this meeting with a number names for donation categories suggested, including a suggestion that the final determination be voted on by members at the Annual Meeting. The membership year is correct in this table, starting November 1, not October 1, as was stated in our meeting.

3. FINDINGS FROM PHONE CALLS WITH SIX PLANT SOCIETY PRESIDENTS, REGARDING THEIR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES AND FUNDING – Gretchen and Peter

We discussed this quickly, since Gretchen and Peter did such a great job summarizing those phone calls. See their summary in Appendix B. Most are structured as we are and have many of the same challenges. A few Societies have substantial administrative staff.

4. TENTATIVELY DECIDE ON A COURSE FORWARD IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS, CHOOSING AMONG THE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURES SUMMARIZED IN BOB’S MEMO - All

This was a rambling discussion. A list of topics and ideas is presented here, rather than a record of the actual discussion.

- Board Positions:
  - It’s great we have overcome our challenge of recruiting for open Board Positions.
  - Position Descriptions need to be updated. In the Board Handbook, they are described briefly in by-laws at the end and in more detail. Feel free to send Rachel revisions to your job description.
  - Gretchen will continue on as an active Past President.
  - Some Board positions will need/appreciate help soon. Specifically:
    - Maria will need help within the year.
    - Elizabeth announced that the Conservation Strategy received a grant from the BLM. Some administrative assistance could be needed as that effort ramps up again. Additional help will also be needed to get the Citizen Botany program going.

- Revenue:
  - We have been budgeting for ~ $10,000 in the red for a few years.
  - Our new fee structure does not go into effect until February 2022.
  - We can’t project what our future revenue stream is going to be.
  - In the mean-time, low key efforts to generate more donations have been fruitful. “We asked and they answered.”
  - We may need to form a development committee in the future.

- Going Forward:
While we have a well-functioning organization, some things are not getting done, and some volunteers are overworked. We should likely convene an ad-hoc exploratory committee within the next year that brings a proposal to the Board re: a paid staff position.

A paid staff person would be an administrative assistant or similar, not an executive director. The Board functions well and will continue at the helm of the MNPS.

Send Karen a list of (generally) small tasks that come up during our respective main jobs (state or chapter level) that are:
- important to our functioning smoothly,
- probably short-term, calendar-based,
- possibly not mentioned in our various job descriptions,
- that we would consider handing over to a part-time "executive" type person.
- Later- see Karen’s email of January 14 for details.

Misc thoughts:
- The Secretary and Membership Chair jobs are closely intertwined. While it’s great to have them covered by volunteers, each are a large undertaking for one volunteer.
- We need to up our social media presence and anything that will increase our exposure and hopefully involvement with younger people.
- “Work pods” may be a way of us supporting each other while accomplishing more.
- Willing volunteers will continue to be the lifeblood of this organization. A staff person should help fill in the gaps and take pressure off some volunteer positions, not supplant them. - Maria

5. SPRING ZOOM BOARD MEETING – is scheduled for Sunday, February 28.

Cont.
### Appendix A

#### 2022 MNPS Dues and Donation Categories

(Effective November 1, 2021 for the 2022 Membership Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Categories</th>
<th>Annual Fees</th>
<th>Proposed State Split</th>
<th>Proposed Chapter Split</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>$75</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student/Living Lightly</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifetime (individual only)</td>
<td>$1000*</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Printed Kelsey fee  
* onetime payment for life with no additional charge for printed Kelsey

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Annual Fees</th>
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<th>Proposed Chapter Split</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Donation Categories</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Friend***</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant Lover</td>
<td>$100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patron</td>
<td>$250</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefactor</td>
<td>$1,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>specify amount</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add wording: "Your additional contribution helps support conservation action, educational programs, and botanical research. Plus you will receive acknowledgement of your contribution in the winter Kelsey."

**100% of donations go to state

*** Please suggest names for the categories
Appendix B

Organizations of Native Plant Societies
November 2020
Gretchen Rupp

Recently, Peter and/or I have spoken by phone with the presidents of six western native plant societies. We wanted to find out how they were organized, whether they had paid staff, whether they shared our difficulty with activating volunteers, and any ideas for overcoming it. Summaries of each conversation are below. Here are my chief impressions:

- Of the five states more populous than Montana, only one native plant society (Colorado) has more members than we do. Yay for MNPS!

- Only two of the six societies have organizational structures substantially different from ours. The Wyoming NPS has only 150 members, two chapters, a very casual, near-spontaneous approach. The Colorado NPS does not have elected officers, but “operating committees,” and pays ~$35,000/year for membership, treasurer and IT services.

- The challenge with activating members to become volunteers is widespread, but not necessarily crippling. For example, Idaho has 12 (!) active chapters, and has successfully turned over its newsletter editor, treasurer, and membership person in the last two years.

- Most very active members are older people, like recent retirees, but certainly not all. Two of the six presidents we interviewed are mid-career.

- Chapters come and go as individual high-energy people step up and later step back. This is not a phenomenon that’s unique to us.

- Chapters are the best level at which to approach potential volunteers. By far the best mode of approach is person-to-person between people who know each other.

- When one group of dedicated volunteers does the work year after year, others come to assume that the work just gets done. Cultivating new volunteers has to be an ongoing process.

- Two of the societies have endowments that were seeded by bequests, from which they fund annual grants.

Interview Summaries

Peter Lesica: I spoke with Mo Ewings, the treasurer and old-timer for the Colorado Native Plant Society. CoNPS has ca. 1100 members. They had similar problems getting volunteers to do some of the more arduous tasks. They now have three paid/part-time positions and pay out ca. $35,000/year to cover the cost, paying $18-$20/hour. They still have a volunteer treasurer and newsletter editor, but they pay a bookkeeper (i.e. membership) and a person who does events and keeps up the Facebook page
etc. They hold plant sales, and charge admission for garden tours and workshops. Mo said that he thinks at least half of their members are primarily interested in gardening with natives.

They have had trouble recruiting people to hold president, vice president and secretary positions at the state and chapter levels. So instead they now have “operating committees.” These committees have four to six people. Theoretically no one is in charge, but Mo said that usually someone takes over, and they get things done. They could never get younger people to take named positions, but they would join committees.

**Tony Frates, Utah NPS webmaster**: We're 100% volunteer in every way - no one is paid anything! It takes that one special person with a lot of energy to make a chapter work (and when that person goes on to do something else, the chapters then often become dormant, unless they have strong chapter support and someone willing to step up). I'll let Kipp Lee tell you more but in my experience, people don't join our organizations necessarily to become active, they just want to show support for the organization. So it is a tremendous challenge. So bottom line: yes, we have exactly the same challenges with very few people interested in volunteering on committees, etc.

**Kipp Lee, President, Utah NPS**: The membership is 350-400 people, with a budget of <$20,000/year. The organization is the same as ours (he viewed our website), with the board meeting 6-7 times a year. Chapter people do not come to state board meetings. Of 12 official chapters, 3-4 are currently active. The board is reaching out to chapters to try to reenergize them. "A chapter is only as strong as its leader." Members are generally, but not entirely, older folks. They recently had a statewide virtual member meeting that worked well. They have a rare plant meeting every year, and are routinely asked for botanical consulting in the field by the Nature Conservancy. They stress connections to land management agencies. They are trying to push native plant landscaping with cities. Their impression is that sources of native plant material are diminishing.

**Steve Love, President, Idaho Native Plant Society**: Chapters struggle to stay viable unless they have strong individual leaders; however, currently the INPS has TWELVE active chapters! Steve is optimistic about the prospects for personal contacts in persuading people to volunteer for the first time, especially at the annual meeting. He has been president for six years, and is recruiting for someone else to step up and take that position. The INPS has successfully turned over its newsletter editor, treasurer, and membership person in the last two years. Like MNPS, their only labor expenses are nominal stipends for the newsletter editor and layout person. They have ~400 members, about half of whom are active. Many are vigorous older people, but there are quite a few younger members. They do not vote by mail for officers, but only at the annual meeting. The state board is organized like ours, and meets 4 times/year, for no more than 90 minutes at a time (how?!) The annual meeting draws 50-90 people, and works much like that of the MNPS.

Activities - they have an endowment that allows for grants of $2000-3000/year, which they augment with some dues revenues. They are active in commenting on conservation issues, assessing land management plans, etc. They sponsor a rare plant working group, with a conference every two years. At the behest of agencies, they seek out and document rare plants. The states' three universities are all pretty strong in plant sciences, and have herbaria. INPS sponsors a plant foray each year, where 40 or 50 people spend three days in one location and collect plants for the herbaria.
Doug Ripley, President, Arizona NPS: He has been president for 10 years, and also edits the journal, which is a whole separate job but no-one else wants it. They have a board of long-time directors, with two new, energetic people. There are 3 officers and several at-large positions. Recruitment to the board and to chapter boards is a challenge. Chapters fall into inactivity as individual sparkplugs move on. They do have two new chapters in the past two years. Recruiting is by personal contact. He thinks 'people just don't do this kind of thing anymore.'

Some of their chapters are formally associated with university herbaria or departments, and have (for a while) grad students involved. The AZNPS has ~600 members and an annual budget of ~$23,000. They have cash reserve of ~$45,000.

They pay a part-time administrator ~$8000/year. She handles the mail, monies and membership, and forwards outside inquiries to the right person. They pay a graphic designer to lay out their journal (2xyear, ~$2500 per issue).

They have a one-day annual conference in a city conference room, followed by a day of field trips. This fall they held a 3-evening webinar conference that drew 350 participants @$10 each. Presentations were split up by geographic province, not too technical.

Katy Duffy, President, Wyoming Native Plant Society - "Wyoming NPS Is a small, low-key, laidback organization." There are fewer than 200 members, with 2 chapters, in Pinedale and Jackson. The board has three officers and two at-large members. Most members of WNPS are older. They have local field trips, pretty spontaneously organized, send out a newsletter 2xyear, and give occasional scholarships. There is no direct conservation activism - it's mostly educational. Dues revenues ($10/year) are mostly spent on printing and mailing the twice-a-year journal. "You guys are so structured - we should come to you for advice!" They have the same problem we do, a shortage of people willing to step forward and lead (I'm not sure how hard they actually work on this, though).

Tom Stewart, President, Native Plant Society of New Mexico: NPSNM has about 700 members, about 50 of whom are lifetime members. Most of the active members are over 60 yo. There are seven chapters, not all active. The state board is constituted much like ours, with 2-year terms for elected officers, plus chapter representatives; the board meets twice a year. They pay their newsletter editor $250/issue for editing and layout, 4 times a year, and they pay a monthly stipend to their membership person. They are quite concerned about keeping stipends low enough that recipients don't have to declare themselves independent contractors. This year they are paying a young member to update the website and FB page.

The budget is ~$25K/year. Costs include an insurance policy, printing/mailing, the stipends for contracted folks, the cost of an accounting program, and a 25% dues split with chapters. They have advertisers in their newsletter (who much prefer the paper version, thinking it's much more impactful than online). They have a small endowment that funds five or more $1500 grants a year; these are mostly educational in nature.

Many members are mostly interested in gardening or landscaping with native plants. Two chapters have had native-plant sales. However, local nurseries and big-box stores now offer much cheaper California-grown "native plants."
Regarding cultivating volunteers, Tom wrote at length: "The most important factor in getting people to take responsibility is a personal connection between the asker and the askee. What hardly ever works is announcing a need for commitment and then passing around a clip board or placing an announcement in the newsletter or to an email group. People don’t respond much. When making a one-to-one offer of some responsibility, it’s best not to convey desperation or begging or that you are off-loading some terrible burden. Instead, there should be the feeling that you are offering a chance to do something important, to make a mark and a contribution that will be recognized. Some folks are more pleased if their role has a title. If anyone is good enough to donate their time, you have to make sure you have organized their job as best you can and set them up to succeed. I know this demands your time and effort, but it pays off in the long run. Nothing turns off a volunteer, maybe forever, like agreeing to help and then feeling their time is being wasted or they haven’t got the information or authority to do what’s needed. Show sincere appreciation, just don’t lay it on too thickly. Acknowledge even partial successes, with helpful suggestions or a dialog that allows them to come up with ideas for improvement. If you treat volunteers well and they start feeling listened to and empowered to make contributions, your reputation for being a good leader will spread and more people will be willing to take the leap and try helping out."