

SW Montana Plant Surveys Yield New Finds

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Southwest Montana has a large number of globally rare plant species, many of which inhabit foothills and mid-elevation grassland habitats on public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. In 2002 and 2003, Peter Lesica and the Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) conducted surveys with BLM support to better understand the status of these plant species. Surveys focused on BLM lands in Beaverhead and Madison counties.

These surveys were extremely productive, documenting 48 new occurrences for Vascular Plant Species of Concern.

Four globally rare species—*Cymopterus hendersonii*, *Draba ventosa*, *Eriogonum soliceps* and *Primula alcalina*—were discovered on BLM lands in Montana for the first time. *Primula alcalina* was thought to be extirpated in Montana, and the metapopulation discovered in the Cabin Creek drainage is now the only known occurrence in the state. Herbarium research confirmed that *Erigeron parryi*, first described over 100 years ago, is a distinct species found only in southwest Montana. Five populations of this Montana endemic are known to occur on BLM lands administered by the Dillon Field Office. In addition, five Montana Species of Concern that are not globally significant were documented on BLM lands here for the first time: *Allium parvum*, *Braya humilis*, *Erigeron asperugineus*, *Kobresia simpliciuscula* and *Pedicularis crenulata* (the first record for Montana).

This newly acquired data, along with information summarized from previous studies, was used to expand and improve ecological and management information for globally rare plants on BLM lands administered by the Dillon Office. In addition, seven landscapes of particular significance for conservation

of globally rare plant resources were identified based on the presence of high-quality populations of multiple species. Site descriptions summarize landscape-level ecological processes and their effects on plant species of concern at these sites, as well as management recommendations for each site. Survey and research priorities for both globally rare species and significant conservation sites are also identified.

As BLM reviews and revises its Sensitive Plant list, this information should provide valuable guidance.