



MONTANA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY

Board of Directors Summer Meeting
By Zoom
Tuesday June 30, 2020 10 am – 12 pm

Attending: Gretchen Rupp, Maria Mantas, Caroline Kurtz, Karen Porter, Shannon Kimball, Beth Madden, Elizabeth Bergstrom, Annie Garde, Kris Boyd, Betty Kuropat, Peter Lesica, Bob Person managing the Zoom software, Rachel Potter recording with Karen Porter recording the last part of meeting.

An audio recording of the meeting is available from this link. [MNPS BOD Recording 20200630](#)
Start time for each agenda item is noted (00:00:00)

Secretary – Rachel. Recording started just into Rachel’s report

- Minutes of the March 7, 2020 meeting. Late changes are needed. Rachel will circulate a third draft to be approved by email. – Later and approved by email. See [MNPS_Board_Minutes_20200307.docx](#).
- Board elections were conducted online and by mail. There were no write in candidates. Jenny Lyman was re-elected as Eastern Director-at-Large, Ryan Quire as Vice President and Rachel Potter as Secretary. The Calypso Chapter smashed the opposition in % ballots returned with 33%. Next was Clark Fork with 15%. Shannon will send a check for \$100 to Karen Porter as their prize. All ballots returned by Maka Flora had flower stamps!
- No changes requested to Board Contact List. See [MNPS_Board_Contacts_20200303.docx](#) and notify Rachel of changes.
- She has been working with Maria on Board Handbook. On hold until the snow flies.

Treasurer – Shannon 00:06.04

- See [2020 MNPS Budget.pdf](#), [2020 MNPS Budget Details.xcl](#), and [2020 MNPS Balance Sheet.pdf](#).
- The budget is tracking as predicted.
- As of June 24, 2020, Checking Balance was \$18,812.16 and Savings was \$41,345.89 for Total Assets of \$41,245.89.

Webmaster – Bob 00:20.00

- Work has been mostly routine tasks with forms. This makes future work easier since they are ready to roll when needed. Progressing on coordinating reporting with Maria. 20 members voted online.
- Please check your Chapter section for accuracy and send Bob updated material.
- Bob thought he had a promising understudy prospect, but they ceased communicating. Everyone needs to continue casting the net for a possible understudy, or even someone to just keep your chapter page up to date.

Membership – Maria 00:24:03

- See MNPS_Membership_Report_June 2020 or find it here in APPENDIX A pg. 6.
- Membership lists are updated quarterly for the Kelsey and will be circulated to the BOD at that time. Let Maria know if you need an update in between.
- Maria presented a draft Monetary Donations Policy for review. Beth noted that all Chapter income needs to be included in State accounting, it is not at this time and is not accounted for in this policy. It was noted that our organization is small potatoes. While we are required to keep many records, the actual IRS reporting consists of a post card stating our income if it is under a given amount details are not submitted. It may be as simple as the Chapters reporting income to Shannon once a year in December. Shannon and Maria will discuss and get back to the Board at the fall BOD meeting with suggestions on how to move forward. A By-Law revision may be needed, not just a Policy. Rachel will look for wording, or lack of it in the By-Laws.
- Chapters have plenty of brochures for the time being. Maria has 150 left. Let Maria know if you need more.
- Revision that clarify and clean up some membership details for brochures, Kelsey, and online is on hold until after the Fall meeting when revision of fee structure will be discussed. Those changes without fee changes were made in the Summer Kelsey.

Newsletter – Caroline 00:36:05

- Deadline is September 10 for the Fall Issue.
- Caroline will contact Caroline Kruckeber-Clemans and Sandy Blake to solicit contributions.

Committees

Conservation Committee – Peter and Elizabeth 00:41:09

- The Conservation Conference *may* be rescheduled for April 2021, but a decision will likely not be made until the Winter Kelsey deadline.
- The Conservation Strategy is in firm draft form. The next step is securing funding to hire a person to add in all the details. Andrea Pipp applied for a grant from the Landscape Conservation Catalyst Fund. It was not funded but she was encouraged and advised to apply for the next cycle, which she will do.
- The Citizen Science and SOC project is also on hold for the field season.
- A letter was submitted to the BLM commenting on better protection in the Pryors re: better protection for rare plants sites from feral horses.

Small Grants - Betty 00:45:06

- All 2019 Grants are complete and paid.
- All 2020 grants have received their first payment and presumably work is commencing.
- Bob reminded everyone that the MNPS now has a Zoom account that the Small Grants committee or others can use. Cost is \$14.99/month. The Board will need to decide to keep it up or cancel and resume as needed.

Other Business

Annual Non-Meeting – Beth 00:47:40

- Sagebrush and Sandhills was cancelled by the pandemic. Eight people worked lots for over 6 months. Gretchen noted that Beth Madden shouldered the lion's share. The Valley of Flowers Chapter is willing to take on \$1,026 of costs not refunded. They were prepared to donate some of the expense of the meeting anyway.
- The raffle went ahead since prizes had already been donated by Xanterra, Oboz, Duckworth, REI, Doug Smith, Tizer Botanical Garden and more. \$3400 was raised and a check has already been sent to Shannon. Bill Glenn and Beth conducted the drawing during his meeting and prizes were awarded (in order) 1) Matt Lavin – Grand Prize Yellowstone, 2) Tad Weaver, Missouri River willow basket 3) Beth MacFawn, Duckworth snap shirt plus Oboz shoes 4) Cathie Jean – Oboz gift cert. plus Duckworth Tshirt and 5) Anna Jacobs – Tizer Botanical Garden Guest Cabin stay.
 - Gretchen will send or help arrange thank you notes and tax letters to raffle donors.
 - The Kelsey winter issue article acknowledging donors will include raffle donors.

Whitebark Pine Conference Donation - Gretchen 01:00:28

The conference was deferred for one year. We were offered our \$1000 sponsorship back, but we decided to have them keep it until the conference is held.

General Discussion on Paths Forward - Everyone led by Gretchen. 01:01:00. The discussion was somewhat rambling and these notes are organized by topic rather than chronological.

- The Society is in a volunteer dilemma both on the Chapter and State level. The Society's activities as we have known them will change dramatically unless we take steps soon. In some Chapters, programs and field trips have all but ground to a halt for lack of volunteers. A hunt for a webmaster understudy, or even assistance has failed. Shannon (announced later) and Gretchen will not run for additional terms in 2021, so candidates for Treasurer and President must be found for those positions. Current volunteers are aging.
- Peter laid out 3 possible paths forward, in his order of preference. This can be found, with added emailed dialogue from Annie, Caroline, Rachel and Gretchen in New roads for MNPS.docx or find here in APPENDIX B pg. 8. There appears to be a consensus to pursue option 1 first, increase volunteer capacity. No one wants to downsize, pull the plug or merge with another organization.

- Our starting line should look at Society goals and what we are doing now to accomplish them - Gretchen.
 - Preservation and Conservation work includes: 1) Conservation Committee comments to agencies and more, 2) Audubon lobbying donation, 3) Rare Plant Conservation Conference, 4) SOC work with list and Citizen Science planning, 5) Rare Plant Conservation Strategy.
 - Study includes 1) Annual meeting, 2) field trips, 3) evening programs, and 4) UM Herbarium assistance, 5) Pioneer Botanist book.
 - Activities that address Preservation, Conservation *and* Study include: 1) Kelsey, 2) small grants, 3) native plant gardening information and projects, 4) web site and 5) social media.

- We need a strategy to better communicate to members, between the Board, and the public. What are our messages and how do we best convey them and create two-way discussions? What does the MNPS do that you as a member care about?

- A lengthy discussion on volunteers included the following:
 - Virtually no other nonprofit conservation groups in Montana (and likely elsewhere) are still 100% volunteer as we are. Many other State Native Plant Society do not have paid staff. The Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan does have a paid staff person and they attribute their success to Chet.
 - We have over 700 members and rising but a shrinking volunteer pool. We ought to be able to make something work. We potentially have great strength. Most failing organizations have shrinking memberships. Ours is growing.
 - Do targeted recruitment. Emails are a dead end. Target specific people in person, after programs, during field trips, etc. Rachel pointedly struck up a conversation with a young person looking at flowers on a trail that may become involved. A Billings person may be interested in creating web based iNaturalist trainings. Beth will be looking through their members and try to *cultivate* specific people. Once they start volunteering for one specific thing, hopefully they will gain momentum. People volunteer most often when they have a connection. They go on a field trip, something clicks.
 - Do our members realize we are all volunteer? Most likely not. As we craft wording to talk about our problems, we do need to be very careful that we do not sound like we are struggling. That's not a group you want to invest your valuable time in.
 - Target children and their families. That's how the Montana Natural History Center started and they are now a large, thriving organization. The Flathead Chapter set out to host one family oriented field trip at the minimum in 2019 and 2020 but failed to pull it off either year. Do more for Earth Day in your area. May help to do joint events with other groups that already do lots of things with kids as a way to get started, get our feet wet, gain proficiency

and introduce us to families. We have expertise that those groups should be glad to have, and we get skills on working with family groups.

- Volunteerism starts at the chapter level. Taking on a state roll may come after.
 - Geographic dispersion of some chapters may challenge volunteer recruitment.
 - In this age of COVID-19, many people are staying closer to home and refocusing on closer to home and doing more gardening. An increased emphasis on native plant gardening may play into that. Many Clark Fork Chapter members are particularly interested in native gardening. Filling the vacant landscape chair, or at least have a committee with possibly a rotating (?) chair seems to be a first step. Do more native garden tours.
 - We have a thriving FB following. Consider tapping into that. Are you a member? Why not?
 - Get our name out there more. Distribute brochures better. Marketing.
 - Our membership, particularly active membership is getting older. We were all in our 30s when we started this 30 years ago. Most of the people attending Clark Fork Chapter meetings are 60 or over. Flathead Chapter gets lots of people to meetings, including young ones, but no one is volunteering.
 - Annie noted that most non-profits have a check box asking if you want to get more involved on the annual dues form. Maybe we should do that.
 - Maria suggested a member survey on Survey Monkey or similar. Gretchen conducted the last survey six or eight years ago and got good response. (Share w Board). What do you want from your organization? What activities are most important to you? What are you willing to personally do to help with that or other? Who are you (demographics)? MTPR does lots of surveys. Annie said she could ask how helpful they are and if they can give us direction. Gretchen will draft a survey and circulate it for comments. We are paying for a Zoom account. It may be worthwhile paying for a more functional survey platform. Survey could also be in paper form in the targeted Kelsey.
 - One idea is a Kelsey issue largely devoted to volunteerism. Interviews or *short* testimonials on how your life is enriched by volunteering with the MNPS on specific things. Put on your thinking cap and write something up now. Include details about what specific tasks you enjoy and why may help potential recruits envision themselves in that role and hopefully step up. A fun story about someone you met. Nice graphically designed help wanted signs. Advertise for someone to plan programs for Chapter X.
- If we decide to try the part time paid staff route:
 - They should be a member and familiar with the MNPS
 - That may not be necessary. Caroline has some experience with linking professionals to groups that need organizational development. **She will think about this.**

- Development must be an early priority. Also an expert on communication, outreach.
- Doesn't seem we are yet clear what we are looking for. Or do we need help figuring that out? Helping us with strategic planning.
- Montana Non-profit Association does this for our members. We are not a member. Maria has done some of this and has found that an independent contractor to do this can be VERY expensive. Need firm items, good contract. Don't forget the logo. You get what you pay for.
- Two Ad Hoc Committees were formed:
 - Member Survey (Beth, Karen, Gretchen leading. Maria will help logistically). The Survey will be prepared using Survey Monkey online and a printed form in the Winter Kelsey (12/10 deadline to Caroline; January issue). Gretchen will draft a version for committee to rework. Need to include "Are you a member? If not, why not" idea.
 - Winter Kelsey (Peter, Annie, Caroline, Betty). Others will be asked to write sections. Idea is to focus on volunteers and volunteering within the Society – why we do it, what are the benefits, etc. Important not to sound "desperate"; best to acknowledge how we are structured and be careful on wording.

The Zoom account is available to committees. Bob can provide instructions.

October Board Meeting. Tuesday October 6. 9-12.

Will include dues structure, dues sharing w chapters, by-laws.

Peter thinks it nice to have an in-person meeting if outside, 6', maybe even masks. This will be harder to do during the week.

Adjourn 12:06

APPENDIX A –

MNPS_Membership_Report_June_2020

Membership update – This report is current as of June 17, 2020.

Membership budget – No major expenses this year yet. So far on budget. We are funded to print more this year if needed.

Membership statistics – The 2020 membership drive is over. Numbers are up from the spring report, and we expect to see more renewals and memberships arrive through the summer and fall. We still have a lot of members that have not renewed since 2019; I encourage all chapter reps to reach out to these people. To know who they are, please refer to the quarterly membership lists I emailed to the board on June 3rd.

Table A. Number of MNPS membership HOUSEHOLDS by chapter and membership type

Number of Households - June 17, 2020					
<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Lifetime</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
Calypso	21	9	1	4	35
Clark Fork	97	35	2	26	160
Flathead	38	11	1	15	65
Kelsey	43	24	1	11	79
Maka Flora	8	5	0	1	14
Eastern-at-large	23	12	2	8	45
Western-at-large	13	5	0	6	24
Valley of Flowers	49	26	5	19	99
Grand Total	292	127	12	90	521

* Maria is now tracking Exchange stats separately (exchange memberships are other native plant societies, libraries, herbaria, arboreta, and the like).

Table B. Number of MNPS MEMBERS by chapter and membership type

Number of Members - June 17, 2020					
<i>Chapters</i>	<i>Individual</i>	<i>Family</i>	<i>Business</i>	<i>Lifetime</i>	<i>Grand Total</i>
Calypso	21	18	1	6	46
Clark Fork	97	70	2	32	201
Flathead	38	22	1	18	79
Kelsey	43	48	1	19	111
Maka Flora	8	10	0	2	20
Eastern-at-large	23	24	2	10	59
Western-at-large	13	10	0	8	31
Valley of Flowers	49	52	5	25	131
Grand Total	292	254	12	120	678

Exchange	44
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Table C. Annual membership for the Montana Native Plant Society over time showing the number of members for each chapter and exchange memberships.

Maria is tracking annual membership a little differently than in the past. She is not including the current year's running tally in this table, only the final quarterly report figures are given for a year. Prior to 2019, Cathie Jean created this table with end of calendar year figures. From now on the numbers entered into this table will be those generated for the fall quarterly report (September).

	<i>CAL</i>	<i>CF</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>K</i>	<i>MF</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>SW</i>	<i>VOF</i>	<i>Reg Total</i>	<i>EXG</i>	<i>GrandTotal</i>
2019	56	207	89	102	22	59	28	124	687	45	732
2018	46	200	95	102	19	54	31	113	660	43	703
2017	38	195	91	92	24	54	27	98	619	43	662

2016	65	204	79	90	20	59	29	102	648	43	691
2015	47	193	88	94	24	57	37	98	638	44	682

Membership Discussion

- Do we need to print more membership brochures? I have about 150. Remember if we increase the membership fee these will be no good.
- **Lifetime Memberships:** We agreed at prior board meetings that we would create a new category for membership: *Lifetime Membership: Couple* (I suggested “couple” rather than “family” because I can’t see how we would track children for their entire lifetimes). When we change the fee structure for dues, I suggest we charge about the same percentage increase for couple LFTM as we do for family which is currently about 25% over individual. Any changes to the classes and fees would have to be incorporated into:
 - Membership Brochure
 - Renewal Cards
 - Membership Paper Forms
 - On-line form
 - Kelsey form
- We would want to be clear that all current LFTM Memberships that have 2 people are grandfathered in and would not be expected to pay any additional dues.
- Paypal Reports: Bob and Maria still haven’t made the change to allow her to download directly from the website, however, it’s still working great as Bob is very responsive to Maria’s requests (thanks Bob!)
- Maria is slowly changing the format of these reports as she sees fit. If you ever wish to see the data differently or want Maria to run a special report for you, please let her know.
- Maria, Bob, and Caroline are working on updating the membership forms. Stay tuned.

APPENDIX B

New Roads for MNPS- Email dialogue started and gathered by Peter Lesica

Peter Lesica

It seems to me that the problem faced by MNPS is two-fold: (1) we need younger people to become members and (2) we need both younger and older members to volunteer for relatively long-term commitments (e.g., state or chapter board positions). We need a plan to make these things happen.

If we can't make them happen, here are a few alternative strategies to keep going. Hopefully putting these out there will help people generate other options for a way forward.

- 1) No action: just keep trying to get more people to volunteer and more "young people" involved.
- 2) Use our savings to hire a half-time manager to do most of the work as well as raise money from foundations for their salary in following years. This is what Montana Nurseryman's Association does. We would probably still need a president and vice-president, but the manager would become the membership chair and the treasurer and probably the webmaster.
- 3) Merge with another non-profit (e.g. Montana Natural History Center) that has paid employees but keep our chapters with chapter activities and perhaps our annual meetings.
- 4) Go dormant until some new people step up and make commitments.
- 5) Adopt the American Penstemon Society plan. Have a newsletter once a year and an annual meeting. Give small grants.

Anne Garde

In regard to Pete's suggestions on how to keep MNPS going, I think if we were to hire a part time person, her/his job would be development, not taking over jobs people are already willing to do for free. That person would be being paid to get the word out about MNPS and finding ways to get more active members. There are people who are good at that. Not my line of work, for sure, but MTPR and The Montana Natural History Center and most nonprofits with paid staff have development people.

Pete also mentioned merging with another society like the MNHC. But if we merged, I don't understand how that would help us if we would continue as MNPS, having our monthly meetings and annual meetings. The volunteers would still go to MNHC, as they do now. Pete, can you or someone explain how that could actually help us? Or what merging means to you?

Rachel Potter

I think they both have good points and (at this time) prefer some merging of Peter's option 2 and Annie's comments that we still have willing volunteers. My current thoughts on priorities for a staff position.

- 1) Development has got to be #1. Touting what we do to current and future members should be an integral part of that, in addition to grant funding etc. I talked about the work on the Rare Plant Conservation Strategy on my walk last night and the group thought it was a wonderful project. "Great, now send in your membership TODAY". We should educate about that and other initiatives more.
- 2) Administrative "support" for the treasurer and membership chairs. Small grants? Betty? As long as we have volunteers, they need to continue to make their own calls and run their own programs, with help as requested. Or do they want it?
- 3) At least the Maka, Kelsey and Flathead Chapters are having big time trouble recruiting volunteers for everything. If the Flathead Chapter is to continue to host programs and field trips, we need help. Yes, we have "scaled back" already but will have to do so dramatically more. I'm tapped out, to put it mildly.

Caroline Kurtz

2. Regarding Peter's thoughts: I'm not as bothered by lack of "younger" people in MNPS. I think the issue is engagement of new blood at the Board and Chapter level? Maybe there's no way to get that unless there is a vacuum? I think this is what finally drove Kathy Lloyd to step down and leave the Kelsey Chapter rep position vacant for a while. Of course it was Bob and Patrick who eventually stepped up, so maybe that isn't such a good example. It does seem to me that there is some very good energy around Chapter activities and hopefully a few new individuals can be snagged to share or lead planning efforts. People will always prefer to attend than lead; I don't think MNPS is doing anything "wrong," it's always difficult to recruit the doers.

However, Peter's thought about a paid position is interesting. I wasn't thinking about a membership manager so much as a communications and outreach coordinator. It's hard to raise money for one's own salary, but a valuable program (a la the developing citizen botany initiative, still in infancy, or statewide plant conservation strategist) can attract external funding. At some point I would love to turn responsibility for Kelsey over to someone who has production as well as editorial skills. I think it's possible such a person could also be adept at managing social media and/or the website. As Kelsey is already a paid position, we would be building on to something we are already comfortable with. Potentially, that person could also do some grant research and writing in support of the citizen botany effort or other MNPS initiatives. (I do think THAT position will need to be its own thing, however, and the framework still needs to be developed and connections with partners explored more fully.) A small portion of grant monies raised can go to supporting the position that raised them.

Gretchen Rupp

Many MNPS leaders are burned out, or must move on from their MNPS roles for other reasons. Our efforts to find successors have mostly failed. We're faced with the deeply painful need to whittle down our organization to one that can be sustained with much-diminished volunteer resources, or to fold it into another outfit, or to find money to pay someone to conduct the essential organizational tasks. I suggest we look at the big picture: 1) what functions our organization currently fulfills; 2) what it is about the current situation that requires major change; and 3) what our general options are, for going forward. In future meetings we can flesh out the possibilities for going forward, decide what aspects/activities of MNPS absolutely must be continued, and set a path forward.

As an alternative to trying to drum up \$\$ to pay a staff member, we might consider a model where MNPS is a much more diffuse organization, with perhaps a strong online presence but get-togethers only as members are inspired to pull them together. Transition to that mode would start with the unfortunate dis-establishment of chapters that just don't have enough volunteers. My opinion is that we should pull out all the stops to keep from needing to do that.

Peter Lesica (again)

I think it is important to attract younger members if MNPS is to continue for more than the next ten years. In the short term, it is important to convince all the members, young and old, to step up and volunteer for long term (2+ years) commitments.

Rephrasing the MNPS Bylaws, our goals are conservation (public comments, conferences), public education (newsletter, field trips) and learning (meetings, plant sales). Okay, but why were many of us willing to volunteer for long periods of time to fulfill these goals? Why isn't that still happening?

(1) Perhaps people don't understand that MNPS is a volunteer organization.

(2) I like going to monthly meetings because I get to see and talk face-to-face with other members that I know and like. Perhaps these days people prefer to do this by way of the internet.

(3) I remember back 30 years ago, agency people told me that field trips were an opportunity to learn plants. I'm not sure that knowing plants is as important today as it was back then. My observation is that now GIS takes precedence over natural history.