

During closing remarks of the October 2011 Rare Plant Conference, it was clear that there was a need for evaluating the existing INPS rank system with other alternatives, including the NatureServe rank system. Participation in a steering committee was solicited by e-mail from a wide group, including RPC attendees and other INPS members. Steering committee participants represented a representative cross-section of INPS, and included botanists from the Forest Service, BLM, USFWS, as well as private consultants and INPS Board members. The meetings took place over telephone, which allowed participation by botanists from all over Idaho. The steering committee was approved by the INPS Board to evaluate the existing INPS rank system with other alternatives, and to submit a recommendation for consideration to the INPS Board.

Over the past year, the steering committee evaluated the pros and cons of many rank systems, along with objectives for what the rank system needed to accomplish. After much discussion and testing, the steering committee made the following recommendation to the INPS Board:

1. INPS will no longer implement its own rare plant ranking system (see INPS rank description and results from 2011 Rare Plant Conference at [http://www.idahonativeplants.org/rpc/2011\\_Results\\_IRPC\\_v2.2.doc](http://www.idahonativeplants.org/rpc/2011_Results_IRPC_v2.2.doc))
2. Instead, INPS would:
  - a) Maintain a list of rare plants; and
  - b) Rank plants using the [NatureServe Rank Calculator](#) via Regional Working Groups.

The reasons for this decision were based on the objectives listed below:

- a) Have a single rank for Idaho to decrease confusion. This will make it easier for federal agencies in determining their own sensitive species lists, which do provide legal protection for those plant species.
- b) Work with the Idaho Natural Heritage Program to create NatureServe ranks so that they are developed faster and so that INPS can collaboratively contribute and have some ownership in the rank that we as INPS accept.
- c) To collaborate more closely with Idaho Natural Heritage Program and share the responsibility and workload of ranking Idaho's species.
- d) Retain independence from Idaho Natural Heritage Program by maintaining its own list of rare plants.
- e) To keep the work of the Idaho Native Plant Society to a minimum (assuming that realistically we won't get the commitment from botanists to compile information and rank species).
- f) Create a more transparent and repeatable method.

**On January 23, 2012, the INPS Board unanimously approved the recommendations of the rank steering committee, with the caveat that this decision is subject to final approval at the next Rare Plant Conference.** The INPS Board was concerned about the elimination of species on a "watch list", and requested reviewing whether there should be both a rare plant list and a watch list. There may also be other aspects of the new INPS Rare Plant List that are fine-tuned through discussion at the RWG pilot meetings and finalized at the next Rare Plant Conference.

The new INPS Rare Plant List (see 2a above) is described in detail in the accompanying document named [INPSRarePlantList\\_02042013.pdf](#).

Regional Working Groups (RWGs) would be used for communicating via listserv as needed throughout the year, and at meetings determined by each RWG. RWGs would provide a forum for sharing information about Idaho's rare plants, coordinating botanical expertise and resources, and communicating relevant conservation information. The steering committee participants decided initially there should be pilot meetings of northern and southern Idaho RWGs before the next INPS Rare Plant Conference. The first pilot meeting is to be held by the southern Idaho RWG on February 7, 2013. In the long term, the RWGs may be split into additional regions as interest and need presents itself.