



## **Board Meeting Minutes, Thursday, January 19, 2023**

The meeting was held at the home of Margie Gibson, President, with some members attending via Zoom.

**Call to order** 2:00 pm

**Present:** Margie Gibson, President; Mary Barrett, Vice-President; Dave Becker, Treasurer (via Zoom); Betty Spence, Secretary; Don Graves, Past President; Wendy Graves, Rick Lass (via Zoom), Beth Leuck (via Zoom), Elroy Limmer; invited: Marty Eberhardt, Facilitator of the SCBG Steering Committee

**Minutes:** Minutes from the Board meeting on December 8, 2022, were approved with the addition of the following paragraph: “Effective January 1, 2023, Margie Gibson and David Becker are the authorized signatories for GNPS financial matters, and should be added as signatories to GNPS accounts, including GNPS accounts at 1st New Mexico Bank and Edward Jones. Donald Graves and Wendy Graves should be removed as signatories to GNPS accounts, including GNPS accounts at 1st New Mexico Bank and Edward Jones.”

[To satisfy the requirements of the bank, the paragraph was further amended by exchange of email on January 25, 2023, to read as follows: “Effective January 1, 2023, Margie Gibson and David Becker are the authorized signatories for Gila Native Plant Society financial matters, and should be added as signatories to GNPS accounts, including GNPS accounts at 1st New Mexico Bank and Edward Jones. Donald Graves, Wendy Graves, William Norris, Jane Spinti, and any other previous signatories, should be removed as signatories to GNPS accounts, including GNPS accounts at 1st New Mexico Bank and Edward Jones.”]

### **Board Reports:**

**President’s Report:** Margie submitted the following report in writing:

I was introduced to town manager Alex Brown by Elroy Limmer (who did the same for the previous two presidents). We submitted a letter with our requests, circulated to the Board members. I’ve asked Betsy Kaido and Elroy to do a program on the history of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, hopefully for fall or next winter. Perhaps we could follow with a program in the future with Ashley’s landscape plan.

Steven Fry of Amigos Bravos has asked GNPS to help identify wetlands in the Gila Watershed as part of a mapping project by Amigos Bravos. They would like to distribute a survey to our members. Steven is willing to do a program on the project. Amigos Bravos has worked with the Native Plant Society of New Mexico (Taos Chapter) on an invasive plant project, according to the Amigos Bravos website.

Many thanks to Wendy for lessons on using our mail accounts and MailChimp and on how to update our website

**Treasurer's Report:** As Treasurer through the end of 2022, Wendy reported that the Gila Native Plant Society account as of 12/31/2022 had a balance of \$13,529.25. The Silva Creek Garden Account as of 12/1/2022 had a balance of \$29,412.38, of which \$1,138.43 related to the Healing Garden.

### **Committee and Other Reports**

**Conservation Committee Report:** Dave Becker submitted the following report in writing:

On behalf of GNPS, the Conservation Committee submitted comments on January 9, 2023, to the Gila National Forest regarding the agency's proposal to remove feral cattle from the Gila Wilderness, expressing GNPS's strong support for the proposed action.

Future items on our radar:

- Draft Recovery Plan for the Mexican Long-nosed Bat – comments due March 7, 2023. The US Fish & Wildlife Service has published a draft recovery plan for this bat, which is known to roost in Hidalgo County and may be helped by GNPS/BCI agave planting efforts.
- Gila Wetland Jewels survey due March 31, 2023. Amigos Bravos (a NM water protection non-profit based in Taos) is coordinating a project to combine high-detailed mapping with stakeholder input to identify the key watershed functions that serve local users and identify where the critical wetlands are that help provide those functions. They recently completed a wetlands mapping exercise on the Carson National Forest. They have put together a survey, which they would like us to submit to our members.
- Gila National Forest Plan Implementation  
GNPS played an important role in developing some meaningful botanical designation features in the Gila National Forest Plan, and that Plan will be going into an implementation stage soon—probably sometime in spring 2023. How those areas are managed and utilized by the Forest (and the public) will be dependent on input as management guidelines are put in place for the botanical areas. Patrice Mutchnick of Heart of the Gila would like to brief the Board and the Conservation Committee on what to expect in the Plan, what GNPS's role was in getting there, and what we might be able to affect moving forward—and the vigilance that will be required to work with the Forest Service and other stakeholders to implement these strong educational and conservation policies in designated botanical protection areas.

- Air Force Military Operation Areas (MOA) Modifications and Expansions  
Davis-Monthan Air Force Base near Tucson has proposed modifying its MOAs in southern Arizona and southwestern New Mexico to allow longer periods of use, low-altitude training (including low-altitude supersonic flights), and allowing the use of chaff and flares. Three of the MOAs overlap the Gila Wilderness or Chiricahua National Monument. The Air Force accepted preliminary scoping comments from the public in June 2022, and expects to issue a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public comment in fall 2023. This is not a project that is likely to have a significant effect on native plants – but Dave is tracking the project for SWNM Audubon, and will evaluate whether GNPS should be submitting any comments (other than a strongly-worded “don’t do this” letter – technical comments may not be necessary or even appropriate). Because expanding these training areas and lowering flight levels would seriously impact birds and birders, SWNM Audubon will begin gathering information from local birders beginning in the spring of 2023 about where they bird and what they see so that we can help submit detailed comments on the DEIS in late 2023.

**Kiosk Committee Report:** Margie, as Chair of the Kiosk Committee, submitted the following report in writing:

The Committee consists of Margie (Chair), Mary and Susan Thompson; most of the photos used are provided by Elroy Limmer.

The south side of the kiosk in the Silva Creek Botanical Garden (SCBG) was rejuvenated beginning January 10 with new fabric and a reprinting of the materials produced last year. It features:

- Permanent topics such as “Why Native Plants” and “About Gila NPS.”
- Feature topics such as about an animal or native plant. These can change when volunteers have the time to write new ones.
- Short-term announcements such as upcoming programs.

The previously empty north side of the kiosk focuses on materials more appealing to children. This includes two garden rules designed by Susan Campbell. We are working on “Why Insects Matter,” aimed at a third-grade level. It’s in three parts: • Pollination • As Food • Decomposers

Other participants/revisions:

- Last summer and during this winter’s holiday break, Silke Schneider, who teaches kindergarten, met with Margie. She’s advising on and reviewing our materials for kids.
- Caroline Metzler writes a wildlife feature.
- Last March, Emily Pollom and Hugh Epping from the Accessibility Working Group of the local ACLU chapter visited SCBG. Emily commented on how to make the kiosk more accessible to wheelchair users (and shorter people). Emily pointed out that the Kiosk is quite tall, and the materials toward the top are difficult to read from the ground. Hugh brought up the idea of concentrating the reading materials toward the bottom with larger print. All the topics were reprinted in larger typefaces and, to the extent possible, moved down.

- Last February, Suzanne Dulle translated “Why Native Plants” into Spanish, which was posted on the kiosk.

The south side of the kiosk was officially launched on January 29, 2022, after weeks of work writing, rewriting for the general public, and then designing the individual topics.

**Book Sales Report:** Rick reported that they had received a shipment of *Common Southwestern Plants: An Identification Guide* from the Colorado Native Plant Society. A few copies had been damaged, not seriously, but to the extent that he would be reluctant to sell them. They could be given away as “door prizes” at some in-person event.

**SCBG Steering Committee Report:** Wendy submitted the following report in writing:

Since the Board met last on December 8, the SCBG Steering Committee has met three times (January 4, January 11, and January 18) and has worked on two outstanding policies by email. Also, Wendy Graves has stepped down as the non-voting facilitator and Marty Eberhardt has taken over as a voting facilitator. Wendy Graves remains on the Steering Committee as a non-voting member in charge of communication with the GNPS Board.

The Siberian Elm Policy was developed by the Committee to establish the expectation that mature elms will eventually be trimmed to 7’ – 8’ stumps in the interest of not allowing them to hinder further development of the garden, which is eventually to be only native species.

The Roles, Responsibilities, and Memberships Policy was written in order to clarify the roles and relationships between the SCBG Steering Committee and the Garden Management Team and will be brought to the GNPS Board for approval at the next GNPS Board meeting.

The meeting time since the January 4<sup>th</sup> meeting has been arranged to interact with Ashley Pedersen, who is now working full-time on our garden plan and interpretation plan. We have three more meetings planned with her before her short, January term ends and her plan will have to be presented to her department for a grade.

We are also in the process of waiting for quotes for the work to be done this spring in the garden’s north end. Once these quotes are received, we will need to bring them to the GNPS Board for approval before the contracts can be signed.

**Discussion:**

Mary asked when Ashley Pedersen was expected to submit the garden plan. Marty Eberhardt said that Ms. Pedersen was scheduled to give a presentation on the full plan on February 11<sup>th</sup> to the SCBG Steering Committee, and would then have until February 15<sup>th</sup> to make any changes that were discussed.

**NPSNM:**

Annual Chapter Report: As Past President, Don shared the annual report of the Gila Chapter that he submitted to the state organization. It is posted on the state website.

State Board Meeting: As representative to the NPSNM Board from the Gila Chapter, Betty submitted the following report:

The Winter Board meeting of the Native Plant Society of New Mexico was held on January 7, 2023, at the Sevilleta NWR Field Station. The two main items on the agenda were the Treasurer's report and the consideration of grant applications.

NPSNM finances are in good shape. Operating revenues for 2022 exceeded operating expenditures, largely thanks to an increase in paid memberships for almost every chapter; the total of 832 members was the highest ever. Investment accounts are starting to rebound from the drop during Covid. The Board voted to use part of the operating surplus to donate \$600 to each of five herbariums around the state (including the one at WNMU) and to give a \$500 Science Teacher Award and \$150 as a secondary Science Teacher Award.

The NPSNM Board considered 20 grant applications. Grant awards are paid out of the Jack and Martha Carter Conservation Fund. The practice is not to touch the fund principal but to use new contributions plus dividends and interest for the year to fund grants; this year that amounted to \$21,000. Of the 20 applications, five were rejected as not fully in keeping with the purpose of the Fund, and a decision on one was deferred until the mid-year Board meeting. Since the money we had to offer this year was still far below the total of the amounts requested on the remaining 14 applications, the amount awarded in most cases was reduced, and no award exceeded \$2,000.

One of the grants awarded concerns our area: John Gorey applied for a grant of \$2,000 for research on an unknown thistle of the high Mogollon Mts. You may recall that John presented an excellent program to GNPS in November on Graham's Thistle. While doing that research he encountered a thistle he could not identify; from photos he sent to New Mexico plant experts there is speculation that it could be a new species endemic to the Mogollons. NPSNM was only able to award him \$1500 instead of \$2000. GNPS might wish to consider awarding him the additional \$500.

The NPSNM Conservation Chair, Rachel Jankowitz, announced that she was planning to withdraw from the post by mid-summer. Although her title is Conservation Chair, she pointed out that there had not been a Conservation Committee to back up the Chair for some years. NPSNM would like to set up such a committee with participation from the chapters.

**Give Grandly 2023 Planning Report:** Betty submitted the following report in writing:

I attended the general planning session for Give Grandly 2023 on January 10, 2023, in the garden at The Commons. Give Grandly is the annual fundraiser for local nonprofits organized by the Grant County Community Foundation with the help of the participants. In recent years the number of participating nonprofits averaged 55, and the Gila Native Plant Society participated. Last year we received donations of close to \$3,000, and we garnered some new members by conversing with people at the live event. The event will be live again, along with a donation website, and the date is Saturday, May 6th.

Each participating organization pays a small fee to fund advertising and event expenses; this year the fee will be \$100. Grant County Community Foundation rounds up sponsors in order to provide matching funds of up to \$500. Last year GNPS brought in close to \$3,000 in donations. Each participating organization also needs to send a representative to planning meetings (one per month) and to perform two tasks related to publicity or event planning.

A new donation platform called Give Gab will be used this year, thanks to funding from the Town of Silver City, and it will have considerable advantages over the old one: donors will be able to pay for up to 10 separate donations with one transaction; funds will go directly to the organizations' accounts instead of being mediated through GCCF; and there will be "peer-to-peer" capability for linking to social media. The donation platform will be active for two weeks before May 6<sup>th</sup> and two weeks after.

At the Grant County Community Foundation, the Give Grandly coordinator will be Mick Smith.

**Wilderness Centennial Planning Report:** Dave submitted the following report in writing:

Planning is getting underway to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the designation of the Gila Wilderness as America's first wilderness in June 2024. Nathan Newcomer of New Mexico Wild is coordinating the planning to have local organizations help coordinate the events that the Forest Service has in mind, with the first planning session on Wednesday, January 18, 2023. Dave will serve as the liaison for GNPS and NPSNM on the planning committee.

### **Old Business:**

**Budget Item for Elm Trimming:** Margie recalled that an amount of \$3,500 had been requested for elm trimming at the north end of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden, and a decision had been deferred. Members of the Board and the Steering Committee had met in the garden Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup>, to view what trimming was planned.

In terms of the cost, Wendy said that the Town of Silver City had agreed to reimburse garden expenses up to \$15,000 per year. GNPS was about 2-1/2 years into a four-year contract with the Town. Mary asked whether the Town needed to review the proposal and pre-approve the funds. Don assured the Board that the Town had never failed to give us what we asked for. The

Town Manager, Alex Brown had said that he wanted the garden to be sustainable. Marty Eberhardt commented that Alex Brown knew that the Town had a good deal with all the volunteer labor going into maintaining the garden.

Mary and Rick said that the visit to the garden on Wednesday had reassured them that at the first phase of trimming did not amount to complete removal and would not be too draconian. Rick also expressed relief that the Town would reimburse the considerable cost.

**Motion: The Board unanimously approves the outlay of \$3,500 to trim elms in the north end of the Silva Creek Botanical Garden.**

### **New Business:**

**Silva Creek Botanical Garden Proposed Elm Policy:** With reference to the document “Siberian Elm Policy,” Wendy clarified the thinking of the SCBG Steering Committee. Siberian Elms were classified as an invasive noxious weed, capable of outcompeting the native plants around them. Since the garden was intended as an educational tool, it was important to avoid the misconception that Siberian Elms were an acceptable species and to demonstrate responsible behavior in terms of what to plant.

Beth said that the policy was well written and clear and expressed what GNPS should be doing as a native plant society. Dave noted that we would need signage to explain why we were doing what we were doing. Mary said that the explanation would be needed not only on the kiosk but near the elms themselves.

**Motion: The Board adopts the Siberian Elm Policy as defined by the SCBG Steering Committee. The motion was adopted with seven yeas, one nay and one abstention.**

**Future Board Meetings:** Margie said, and Dave concurred, that it would be helpful to set up a regular schedule of Board meetings, preferably every month. Rick agreed to send out a doodle poll for the time of the next meeting.

**Amigos Bravos Survey:** Margie said that, as mentioned in her President’s Report and the Conservation Committee report, the Amigos Bravos organization was working on a project to map the critical wetlands in the Gila watershed and had developed a survey, which they would like us to send out to our members. Don said that before we agreed to collaborate with them, we should do some due diligence and find out more about the organization. He understood that they had had contact with the Upper Gila Watershed Alliance. Margie noted that they had apparently worked with the Taos Chapter, and GNPS could check with them as well.

Dave said that he had had some contact with Amigos Bravos, which was a fairly standard water quality protection organization. As a general rule, GNPS needed to be concerned that we were not seen as a lobbying organization in order to maintain our nonprofit status. Don mentioned that at the NPSNM Board meeting the Conservation Chair had stressed that the organization’s advocacy efforts needed to specifically relate to native plants. However, protecting wetlands would indeed help protect native plants. He understood that Amigos Bravos had helped with a

mapping project in the Carson National Forest. Dave said that local expertise might be able to identify wetland areas of special significance to native plants, and that could bring them greater protection.

Don and Wendy offered to contact UGWA and the Taos Chapter for more information.

**Heart of the Gila:** Margie reported that Patrice Mutchnik of the Heart of the Gila organization had asked to do a 15-20 minute presentation to the GNPS Board about implementation of the new Gila National Forest Plan. Beth said that Patrice had been instrumental in getting some specific botanical parameters incorporated into the Plan; it was valuable to hear her report. Dave said that Patrice wanted us to consider how GNPS might be involved in implementation of the Plan, possibly through monitoring or educating our membership about the Plan.

Margie asked whether we should have a full Board meeting with Paatrice, or have the Conservation Committee meet and report back? If the full Board were to meet, should it be added on to a regular Board meeting or a separate meeting? Dave noted that Patrice would probably not be available until March. It was agreed that the topic was of interest to the full Board, but we could be flexible on the timing to accommodate Patrice.

### **Give Grandly 2023**

Betty said that the Board had several decisions to make about Give Grandly 2023: Did we wish to participate in Give Grandly this year? If so, did we wish to have a booth at the live event on May 6<sup>th</sup>? If we decided to participate, we needed to designate a contact person, and preferably a back-up person as well. GCCF was asking those who typically receive many donations to contribute a little extra beyond the \$100 fee; did we want to do that, and if so how much?

It was generally agreed that it was worthwhile for GNPS to participate in Give Grandly. Last year GNPS had garnered close to \$3,000 in donations plus matching funds. Betty and Rick reported that having a booth at last year's event had enabled us to make contact with new people. Some had expressed a desire to join and had been told the procedure through NPSNM. Betty hoped that an arrangement could be made this year to register people for membership then and there.

With regard to how much extra to contribute beyond the required \$100 fee, Mary asked how the amount of donations GNPS gained at Give Grandly last year compared with that of other organizations; where did we fall on the spectrum? Betty said that we were about in the middle. Some larger organizations took in quite a bit more, but some of the smaller nonprofits could barely reach the matching fund level of \$500. After some discussion, it was agreed that GNPS could pay \$50 in addition to the required \$100 registration fee.

Dave volunteered to be the primary contact for Give Grandly 2023, and Betty agreed to be his back-up.

**Motion: The Board voted unanimously to participate in Give Grandly 2023, including a booth at the live event on May 6, 2023, and to pay an extra \$50 in addition to the regular registration fee of \$100.**



**Wilderness Centennial:** With reference to his written report on the planning for the Wilderness Centennial in 2024, Dave said that we could start thinking about we would like GNPS to participate. For instance, we might want to collaborate with the Silver City Museum. Dave was the GNPS representative to the effort; Beth agreed to be his back-up.

**John Gorey's Thistle Project:** Betty explained that John's project to continue searching for more examples of a thistle that was a potentially new species endemic to the Gila had been accepted by the NPSNM Board, but had been awarded only \$1500 instead of the \$2,000 applied for. She thought that GNPS might consider awarding him \$500 to make up the difference. Mary asked if there was a reason why NPSNM had lowered the award. Betty said that the reduction was because NPSNM had a large number of worthwhile grant applications this year but had a limited amount to distribute; John's application had been viewed very favorably. Don explained that John would have to be searching even higher in the Mogollons than he did for the Graham's Thistle, and the search would take quite a bit of his time. Wendy suggested that, as an alternative to just giving John the \$500, we could invite him to submit a grant application to GNPS for that amount; it could be similar to the one he had submitted to NPSNM. The suggestion met with general approval, and Don agreed to contact John Gorey about it.

**Quetzalcoatl Temple:** Margie explained that Quetzalcoatl Temple had a property near Silver City where they were growing medicinal plants. She had been contacted by Athena Wolf, the leader of the organization, who had two requests: they would like to be able to send someone to GNPS meetings and they would like to have someone visit their garden.

Don mentioned that Quetzalcoatl Temple had submitted a grant application this year to NPSNM, and it had been rejected because the organization was not entirely concerned with native plants. Wendy said that, worse yet, last year Quetzalcoatl Temple had organized a plant sale/giveaway in which one of the plants they gave away was mullein, a noxious, invasive weed in our area; apparently they were unaware that it was not a native plant. Athena Wolf was, in fact, a member of GNPS, and it seemed that a visit from GNPS would be an opportunity to educate. Mary said that Quetzalcoatl Temple might be seeking to have GNPS give a stamp of approval to their efforts, which were not totally in line with our mission, and she would not want anyone from the Board to visit officially. Margie and Elroy stressed the need to educate them about non-native plants. Wendy said that she would be willing to visit as an interested member of GNPS, not as a Board member. Betty pointed out that the first request, to allow someone from their organization to attend our evening programs, was not a problem; anyone was welcome to do so.

Margie concluded that she could respond by saying that anyone from their organization was welcome to attend any of our evening programs and that an interested GNPS member would like to visit their gardens.

### **Other Business**

**Earth Day 2023:** Dave asked if we were planning to participate in Earth Day this year and, if so, when we needed to sign up. Don said that the organizers would definitely be sending us a notice when the time came. Earth Day was one of the five or six table events that GNPS

participated in during the course of the year. It was fortunate that Jim Blurton was always willing to help us set up and take down.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm.**

**Appendix 1: Motions passed by exchange of email since the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting**

**Motion passed by exchange of email January 3, 2023**

**The Board approves the President's nomination of Elroy Limmer as a Board Member at Large to fill a vacancy.**

Explanation: Margie Gibson and Mary Barrett, formerly Board Members at Large, became officers and left vacancies in the category of Board Members at Large. One such vacancy has been filled. The Bylaws allow the President to nominate a replacement for such a vacancy with the approval of the rest of the Board. The nominee would fill the term ending on December 31, 2023. The President nominated Elroy Limmer, who is willing to serve for a year. Elroy has been a very active member; he served for ten years as the botanical garden manager and has been a past president. His experience will be a valuable addition to the Board.