Alberta Native Plant Council
P.O. Box 52099, Garneau Postal Outlet, Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2T5

June 19, 2018

Minister of Environment and Parks
208 Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

To the Honourable Shannon Phillips, Minister of Environment and Parks:

**Re: Resources for Alberta Conservation Information Management System**

On behalf of the Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC), I am writing because we have a concern over the sustainability of the Alberta Conservation Information Management System (ACIMS), the provincially run Conservation Data Centre (CDC). ANPC promotes knowledge and conservation of native plants and ecological communities in Alberta. I have enclosed a summary fact sheet about ANPC for your interest and encourage you to visit our website to learn more about our organization CLICK HERE.

Our concern lies in the lack of staffing resources provided to maintain ACIMS. ACIMS staffing level is less than one full-time equivalent (FTE) position (Figure 1). Alberta is one of the busier provinces when it comes to land use, yet it is second to last when it comes to resourcing its CDC.

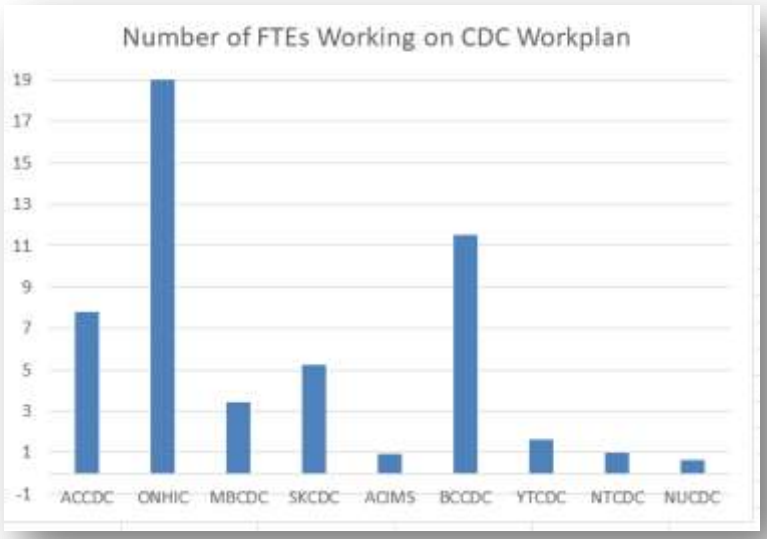


**Figure 1. CDC Full-time Equivalent Positions in Canada.**

(Source: NatureServe Canada Network Data 2017)

ACIMS processes and stores spatial and attributional data related to biological elements in Alberta, including plants, lichens, fungi, ecological communities, invertebrate and vertebrate animals. ACIMS data are critical to land use management such as implementing the Land Use Framework through Biodiversity Management Plans, evaluating land use disposition applications, informing Species at Risk Strategies, and managing Provincial Parks.

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ANPC relies heavily on web data made available by ACIMS for several of our projects and initiatives. Additionally, consulting organizations, government departments and academic institutions also rely heavily on ACIMS data, which are sadly out of date. The last update to the website was done in October 2017, and took two years for something that ideally should be done at least yearly, preferably every 6 months.

We feel that ACIMS no longer has the staff to get data into their system in a timely fashion nor the staff to get updates posted. We feel that ACIMS is not sustainable with the current lack of resourcing.

The ANPC notes that there are vacant positions at ACIMS that are not being filled in a timely manner. In fact, some positions have been vacant for years. It appears that when individuals have moved on from positions, they are not replaced, yet the same or more work is expected of the remaining staff. We feel that ACIMS needs more staff resources to keep up with Alberta's continued growth and commitment to biodiversity. The level of staffing for ACIMS does not meet the standards set by other provinces, including those with similar biodiversity, but with less land use pressures, such Saskatchewan, Manitoba and BC (Figure 1).

Specifically, the ANPC strongly **recommends that five full time positions are resourced for ACIMS:**

- Three positions to fill vacant positions of Botanist, Ecological Communities Coordinator, and Invertebrate Zoologist, and
- Two positions to perform additional data management to meet current needs.

If our recommendation is not feasible, I would appreciate the rationale or reason, as well as a commitment to address this in the future.

Thank you in advance for consideration of our concern and recommendation. If you would like to know more about our organization or of our concern, feel free to contact us at info@anpc.ab.ca.

Sincerely,
Alberta Native Plant Council

Laurie Hamilton
ANPC Vice-President

lh/km

# We Value Native Plants

**Since 1987, the Alberta Native Plant Council (ANPC) has worked to share knowledge of native plants and to support conservation of species and ecosystems.**

Native plants are a passion for our members and volunteers. Some ANPC members have jobs where knowledge of native plants is important: science, education, conservation, land management, environmental assessment, reclamation, landscaping, and horticulture. Other members are dedicated naturalists who devote time to learning about and exploring the world of native plants.

Within the organization, the ANPC has committees that handle projects in the areas of education and information, rare plants, reclamation and horticulture, and conservation action. In addition, the newsletter committee handles the production of *Iris*, and our webmaster keeps the ANPC website up to date.

## Developing projects and publications

*Rare Vascular Plants of Alberta* was published in 2001, and this beautifully designed guide has been an important resource for those working to increase our knowledge of rare plants in Alberta. As rare plant knowledge has increased, pages on additional rare species have been published online.

The **"Native Seed Source List"** is a guide listing suppliers of native seeds and plants that are suitable for use in Alberta. This resource supports the efforts of people who are encouraging biodiversity by including native plant species in reclamation, restoration, landscaping, and gardening. The list is regularly updated.

**"Posey's Rogues: A Gallery of Exotic Invasive and Non-invasive Plants of Alberta"** is a wiki devoted to sharing information on plants that it refers to as "aliens — plants not native to Alberta in the recent past, prior to European settlement." The wiki lists plants that threaten to invade Alberta's native vegetation and provides drawings and photos to help people identify those plants. It also gives information on life history, habitat, and control methods.

Education is one of the objectives of ANPC, and members have written **policies and guidelines** to fill information gaps that exist in the province. To date, guidelines have been written for these topics:

- rare vascular plant surveys
- botanical surveys in areas of proposed disturbance
- plant rescues
- collection of native plants for horticultural use, for research, and by wildcrafters
- the purchase and use of wildflower seed mixes

***Iris* is the newsletter of ANPC**, published three times per year. A good read, *Iris* includes articles on ANPC projects and events, particular species or ecosystems, botanizing adventures in conservation areas, tips and tricks of plant identification from the experts, book reviews, and more.

Look for more information about all of these items on the ANPC's website. www.anpc.ab.ca

## Spending time with other plant lovers

Lisa Matthias

Indoor plant study

Rare plant and ecology study groups meet autumn through spring in Medicine Hat, Calgary, and Edmonton. In northern Alberta, a field-based study group is active through the growing season and into early autumn. Check our website for information on how to join these study groups.

Peter Kershaw

Workshop – Role of Plants in Alberta's Wetlands

The ANPC holds a workshop each spring in conjunction with the group's annual general meeting. Interesting speakers share their knowledge on native plant–related issues and initiatives, and the day gives all those who attend a chance to learn and to socialize with other plant lovers.

Nature Conservancy of Canada

Keying plants in the field

Botany Alberta is an annual event, held over a weekend in one of many botanically interesting places in Alberta. Plant lovers gather to learn about the ecology of a place, to explore and botanize in different habitats, and to enjoy the company of others with shared interests.

ANPC members organize a wide range of botany field trips every summer. Details on how to contact the organizers for each trip are found on the ANPC website.

## Contributing to policies affecting native plants

Members of the Alberta Native Plant Council have provided expert input to many committees and stakeholder groups in Alberta. In 2015, ANPC actively participates on the Foothills Restoration Forum Technical Advisory Committee, Rumsey Technical Advisory Committee, Endangered Species Conservation Committee, and several species-at-risk recovery teams.

### *For more information*

Visit the Alberta Native Plant Council website at www.anpc.ab.ca or contact us at info@anpc.ab.ca.

**by Patricia McIsaac.** *Pat is an editor with rusty botanical skills. She loves field guides and taking plant photos.*

Published 2015 © Alberta Native Plant Council; Text © Patricia McIsaac.
Cover photo – Alpine meadow above treeline, Whitehorse Wildland Park © Sam Pittman.

## Keeping an eye on conservation areas

The Alberta Native Plant Council acts as volunteer steward for Whitehorse Wildland Park (includes Cardinal Divide area), Big Sagebrush Candidate Natural Area, Clyde Fen Candidate Natural Area, and Nisku Native Prairie Park Reserve. Members visit these sites on a regular basis, collect information on the vegetation and other aspects of the natural history, and report on land use and disturbance.

## Volunteering in aid of native plants

The Alberta Native Plant Council has a reputation for seeing a need and stepping forward to fill it. All of our work is done by volunteers, and there are many ways that members can become involved.

The ANPC board and committee members handle various duties on behalf of the membership, maintaining the organization and guiding the various conservation and education activities that are underway at the time. All ANPC projects and initiatives provide learning and networking opportunities for our members, whether people have a lot of time to volunteer, or just a little.

**Consider joining the Alberta Native Plant Council and becoming part of this long-standing organization that advocates for native plants.**

ALBERTA
Native Plant
COUNCIL

**www.anpc.ab.ca**