Important Plant Areas (IPAs) are natural areas of great botanical significance. Government agencies, non-governmental organizations, scientists and others use IPAs to prioritize wildlands for conservation as well as for research and education. Information on IPAs is stored in online databases and maps around the world, such as the Kew Gardens 2016 State of the World’s Plants Report. According to the Kew Report, 1,771 IPAs have been identified globally, but few in the U.S.

The NPCC and other groups have formed a U.S. IPA Partnership; it is composed of the Native Plant Conservation Campaign, the Plant Conservation Alliance Non-Federal Cooperators Committee, Botanic Gardens Conservation International U.S., the California Native Plant Society, and other leading plant science and conservation groups. The Partnership advocates for the designation and protection of U.S. IPAs as integral to the conservation of the flora of the U.S.

The creation of IPA databases like Kew’s implement Target 5 of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which states that “At least 75 per cent of the most important areas for plant diversity of each ecological region[should be] protected with effective management in place for conserving plants and their genetic diversity.”

IPA databases are similar to the Important Bird Areas (IBA) databases maintained by the Audubon Society and Birdlife International, which identify 2,758 IBAs in the U.S. and over 12,000 worldwide.

IPA databases and maps act as focal points for collecting and organizing data about native plants and plant communities. IPAs themselves serve many functions, including:

- Botanical and ecological research – IPAs provide sites where rare plants, intact native plant communities, ecosystem services, ecosystem function, and land management can be studied
- Land management – IPAs are used to prioritize wildlands for protection
- Education – IPAs are natural classrooms where students can study botany and ecology
- Public outreach – IPAs help cure plant blindness (the widespread human failure to recognize the essential role of plants in the survival of life on earth) by documenting diversity, beauty and ecosystem services provided by native plant communities in the wild.

Native plant societies, agencies and others in several U.S. states have already identified some IPAs. However, these U.S. IPAs have been designated based on inconsistent and highly variable criteria including:

- Presence of rare or endangered plant species
- Presence of rare or endangered plant communities
- Undamaged plant communities
- Species richness
- Edaphic, hydrologic and/or geologic features
- Beauty

The mission of the Native Plant Conversation Campaign is to promote the conservation of native plants and their habitats through collaboration, research, education, and advocacy.
The Native Plant Conservation Campaign and our partners are gathering data from existing IPA databases and information on current designation methods. We are using this information to create a preliminary U.S. IPA Showcase and Map. We are also working to develop uniform methods and criteria for IPA designation. The IPA Partnership will produce a comprehensive, consistent and peer reviewed IPA Database and Map for the U.S.

**Proposed IPA Project- 2 Stages**

**Stage I: IPA Partnership and Showcase**

The IPA Partnership will:

- Collect information from existing state IPA projects for the preliminary online IPA Showcase
- Build the online Showcase, photo library, map and interface. The Showcase may be modeled on the [CalFlora Great Places](http://www.calflora.org/) tool, [Florida Native Plant Society Native Plant Hotspots](http://www.floridanatives.org/), or California Native Plant Society IPA database (in development).
- Help fund, manage, and staff the IPA Project

The IPA Showcase will aggregate existing information and photos on IPAs, as available. It will

- Highlight the beauty and diversity of, and threats to, U.S. native plant communities thereby combating plant blindness.
- Identify natural areas in need of conservation
- Demonstrate the importance of native plant societies and other plant science and conservation organizations in identifying, monitoring and protecting the flora of the U.S.
- Demonstrate the need for a U.S. National IPA database (Stage II)

The Showcase will also act as an evolving prototype which will eventually become a consistent, comprehensive template for a U.S. IPA Database. This database will constitute Stage II of the project.

**Stage II: IPA Database of the U.S.**

The IPA Partnership will

- Develop uniform methods, criteria and peer review protocols for designating IPAs. IPA designation methods may be based on the [New Mexico Rare Plant Conservation Strategy (Appx D)](http://www.nmnpcc.org/), the [Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund](http://www.criticalecosystems.org/) Global Hotspots, the [IUCN Key Biodiversity Areas Approach](http://www.iucn.org/) and 2016 [Identification Methods](http://www.plantlife.org/), the [Plantlife International’s Important Plant Area Program](http://www.plantlife.org/), and/or the CNPS IPA database (in development), among others.
- Identify information gaps (states without IPAs, incomplete IPA databases, etc.)
- Identify state partners to fill gaps (native plant societies, heritage programs, botanic gardens, etc.)
- Assemble a consistent, interactive U.S. online IPA Database, photo library, and map which will be available to researchers, educators, environmentalists and others
- Advocate for restoration and protection of U.S. IPAs as integral to the conservation of the flora of the U.S.

For more information and links to IPA databases in the U.S. and worldwide, see the [NPCC Important Plant Areas Page](http://www.npcc.org/)
Important Plant Area Showcase
Request for Information and Photos

Information Request:
Please provide information (Questionnaire below) for 1-3 representative IPAs for which data are available in the state. Of course, there may not be sufficient information to answer all the questions below. Any information you can share is greatly appreciated!

Photograph Request:
We also need photographs for the IPA Showcase. The online Photo Showcase will highlight the diversity and beauty of U.S. plant communities and the contributions of native plant societies and others to protecting them. If you have or know of good photographs of IPAs that would be suitable for the Showcase, please let us know. Please provide direction on how the photos should be captioned and attributed.

IPA Showcase Questionnaire

- State
- Name of IPA
- Location
- General plant community type
- Description - why IPA is important and representative
- Ownership
- Protected status – e.g. none, park, designated special interest area, research natural area, wilderness, etc.
- Brief management history – e.g. resource extraction, restoration
- Ecosystem services provided by the IPA – e.g. pollinator habitat, groundwater recharge, erosion control, nutrient cycling, storm/flood control
- What rare plants are present?
- What rare or keystone animals are present?
- Role of local Plant Groups in identifying, monitoring and protecting the IPA
- Methods and criteria for IPA selection
- Any land, species or resource management plans that include the IPA?
- Threats to the IPA?
- Use by the public and researchers – e.g. visitors/year? Ongoing research projects?
- Monitoring: are there rare species, climate response/phenology or other monitoring programs in place?

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