

CSC Project Proposal – 2020

Submitted 12/9/2019

Project Title: Rhode Island Natural Heritage Data Management

Goal: This grant will fund RINHS to maintain and manage Rhode Island's Natural Heritage Database including maintaining old data, receiving and entering new data, and responding to non-commercial data requests by non-profit, education, and conservation groups. As part of maintaining and updating the Natural Heritage database, as well as for other benefits, this grant includes some support for the RINHS botanist position as described below.

Brief Description: The work includes 2 components with separate budgets:

1. Management of rare species data (the Natural Heritage Database). RINHS employs a part-time rare species clerk to do the following tasks:
 - a. improving the reliability and comprehensiveness of existing data through archival research, QAQC, and data mining,;
 - b. gathering and incorporating new field data received from Native Plant Trust, RIDEM, volunteers, and other sources;
 - c. delivering data tables to RIDEM for the production of natural area maps and provision of data to state agencies and commercial users;
 - d. fulfilling data requests from Rhode Island non-commercial (education, research, and non-profit conservation) users, per Heritage Data MOU.

2. Support the botanist position at RINHS in order to begin to organize a review of plant statuses in RI pursuant to an upcoming revision of the rare plant list (not the revision itself which would require additional funding). The support would have the following benefits:
 - a. In 2016, the RI Natural Heritage MOU participants agreed to accept as an update to the Heritage plant list a list of rare plants included in an appendix of the 2015 RI Wildlife Action Plan. It was understood at the time that this was a shortcut to a proper review of rare plant statuses based on qualified field data, but given the urgent need for a list update, this was accepted with the expectation that the list would be reviewed and revised as soon as feasible.
 - b. This work on rare plants would be part of the Rhode Island Digital Plant Atlas project which was just begun by RINHS and 6 partner organizations. It will review the status of all vascular plants in Rhode Island, updating comprehensive statewide plant surveys of 1998 and 1952. The money in this proposal would be part of a larger project budget though a data update and written review of the status of rare plants (on the 2016 Heritage list and other candidate species) would be a deliverable of this particular grant.
 - c. This work would be carried out by the RINHS's botanist and this funding would also help maintain this position at the Survey for the general benefit of conservation stewardship in the state.

Details & Deliverables:

1. Improvements to the data for 2020 will include:

- finish the entry of a small number of "problem" reports still open at the end of 2019;
- process all new data provided by all sources during 2020 (incl. 2019 forms just now being received).

- continue to populate files for previously unlisted plant species added in Rhode Island Rare Plants 2016; this includes making and ranking Element Occurrences based on data for these species that was mined in 2019;
- review and revise taxonomy as necessary;
- begin to create files on species appearing in the new animal list for the first time
- finish drafting written QAQC procedures (begun but not finished in 2019)

Data delivery to RIDEM will occur twice, once in the spring and once in the fall. Per the Natural Heritage MOU, RINHS will continue to answer data requests from Rhode Island based non-commercial users, especially conservation land stewards.

2. Employ a botanist who will be available for consultation by conservation stewards and undertake a review of plants in the 2016 Heritage list with reference to existing field data; work with Digital Plant Atlas partners to gather all available data and target new field work; write a report recommending status changes for species, identifying data gaps, and recommending future work.

Timetable and Benchmarks:

1. Data

Jan-Dec Rare species clerk updates files and records under supervision of RINHS
April & Nov Enter new rare species observations
May & Nov Submit rare species observations to RIDEM for map revision

2. Rare Plants

January Continue to organize existing data and field surveys; identify gaps
March-May Organize volunteer field work efforts for the 2020 field season
November Written interim report

Budget:

Amount	Purpose
1. \$ 4,275	rare species clerk(s) (\$19/hr [wages + tax/fringe] x 4.5 hrs/week x 50 weeks)
2. \$ 4,798	botanist (140 hours [1/12 th FTE] @ \$34.27/hr [salary + fringe])
\$ 907	RINHS supervision/indirect

Total REQUEST: \$ 9,980

Payments will be made to the fiscal agent for the project:

Rhode Island Natural History Survey
David Gregg, Executive Director
PO Box 1858
Kingston, RI 02881

Project oversight will be done by: David Gregg.