

The latter has been dated to 2290±40 B.P. (Beta-177964).<sup>13</sup>

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# THE VERN HARMS IMPORTANT PLANT AREAS OF SASKATCHEWAN PROGRAM

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Important Plant Areas is a conservation program first developed by Plantlife International, a UK-based organization, to provide a platform for identifying and preserving significant wild plant populations. According to Plantlife, an Important Plant Areas program should “inform and underpin existing international, regional and national conservation programmes and legislation”. Ultimately, their hope is “that Important Plant Areas will act as a benchmark for determining whether the strongest protection, under any existing legislation, is being afforded to the most important sites for plants.”<sup>1</sup>

Since the program's debut in Europe, other jurisdictions have followed suit. In North America, arguably the most well-developed programs are administered by the California Native Plant Society and our nearest neighbours to the south, the Montana Native Plant Society, for use in their respective states.

Using Montana's program as a template, the Botanical Assessment Working Group<sup>2</sup> (of which Nature Saskatchewan is a member), has adapted the program for Saskatchewan with the hope that

the provincial government will use it in its landscape planning approach. Now that the primary goal of reassessing rarity rankings for Saskatchewan's plant species is complete, the Botanical Assessment Working Group can shift its focus to a habitat level.

The hope is that an Important Plant Area designation will provide regulators and decision makers with information and an opportunity to direct development away from these significant sites. Other opportunities may include applying for funding for data collection, monitoring, or management of these sites, and working with land managers to continue to make decisions that are beneficial for the plant species and habitats that occur on these sites.

The Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan website will serve as a clearinghouse for the program. The website will have details about the program, how to nominate a site, and how sites will be adjudicated by the Botanical Assessment Working Group. Eight sites have already been designated in Saskatchewan and information on them will be available on the website soon.

Visit [www.npss.sk.ca](http://www.npss.sk.ca) to learn more and to start your site nomination!

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