

Report of Surveys
for the
New Mexico Army National Guard
Rio Rancho Site



September 2008

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SUMMARY

The U.S. Army, faced with the challenge of fulfilling its military mission without compromising responsible land stewardship, initiated a biological resources management program for lands under their jurisdiction in New Mexico. As part of this program, a survey for species with federal or state status was conducted at the Rio Rancho New Mexico Army National Guard facility. This survey provides information required by the New Mexico Army National Guard to manage their lands responsibly and to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.

Thirteen potential rare species are found in Sandoval County. Of these, only two, Santa Fe milkvetch (*Astragalus feensis*) and La Jolla prairie clover (*Dalea scariosa*), have habitat requirements similar to those found on the facility grounds. Both these species are listed as “species of concern” by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of New Mexico. La Jolla prairie clover is listed as a “sensitive species” by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

The entire facility was searched for both these species. Neither species was detected.

Natural Heritage New Mexico recommends periodic surveys for both Santa Fe milkvetch and La Jolla prairie clover after construction is completed on the far west end of the facility.

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army, faced with the challenge of fulfilling its military mission without compromising responsible land stewardship, initiated a biological resources management program for lands under their jurisdiction in New Mexico. As part of this program, a survey for species with federal or state status was conducted at the Rio Rancho New Mexico Army National Guard facility. This survey provides information required by the New Mexico Army National Guard to manage their lands responsibly and to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations. Specifically, this survey clears the western end of the facility for development.

Thirteen potential rare species are found in Sandoval County. Of these, only two, Santa Fe milkvetch (*Astragalus feensis*) (cover photo) and La Jolla prairie clover (*Dalea scariosa*), have habitat requirements similar to those found on the facility grounds. Santa Fe milkvetch has been found in Bernalillo, Sandoval, Santa Fe, Torrance, and Hidalgo (where it is very likely introduced and may not persist) counties of New Mexico (NMRPC 2008). It prefers sandy benches and gravelly hillsides in piñon-juniper woodland or plains-mesa grassland. La Jolla prairie clover is locally abundant in the central Rio Grande Basin, specifically Bernalillo, Sandoval, Socorro, and Valencia counties of New Mexico (NMRPC 2008). It prefers open sandy clay banks and bluffs and is often found along roadsides. The New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council finds that the “(La Jolla prairie clover is) often found along recently disturbed road right-of-ways and, thus, may be rather early successional.” Both Santa Fe milkvetch and La Jolla prairie clover are listed as “species of concern” by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the State of New Mexico. However, the New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council (NMRPC 2008) states “some populations (of Santa Fe milkvetch) have undoubtedly been affected by urban or rural development, but many populations are isolated, safe from most disturbances, and not threatened by the current land uses. The La Jolla prairie clover is listed as a “sensitive species” by the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The NMARNG Rio Rancho facility is located on the far west side of Rio Rancho, New Mexico on a mesa that falls away to the west and east. The area is developed with roads, structures, and field training facilities. There is relatively little land not impacted by Army activities.

The general vegetation is characterized by grama (*Bouteloua spp.*) grasslands with strong components of oneseed juniper (*Juniperus monosperma*). Rabbitbrush (*Chrysothamnus nauseosus*), snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*), and tree cholla (*Opuntia imbricata*) are also present. Blue grama (*Bouteloua gracilis*) is the dominant grass but strong components of black grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*), and galleta (*Pleuraphis jamesii*), are interspersed throughout the area.

METHODS

Surveys were conducted in May and June of 2008. The entire facility and the area surrounding the facility were walked to ensure that all vegetative habitats were covered. As the most western section of the facility was to be developed, it was thoroughly checked and any plants similar to Santa Fe milkvetch or La Jolla prairie clover carefully evaluated.

RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Neither Santa Fe milkvetch nor La Jolla prairie clover were found on facility grounds or in the area surrounding the facility. As both species can be found in disturbed soil and may be somewhat successional, Natural Heritage New Mexico recommends post-construction surveys.

LITERATURE CITED

NMRPC. 2008. The New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council. Website:
<http://nmrareplants.unm.edu/about.html>.