Report to NWT CIMP
Project "General Status Ranking of all Vascular Plants in the NWT"
April 2004

Background

This project is part of commitments made in the spirit of the *Accord for the Protection of Species at Risk in Canada.* It contributes to the next report on the General Status Ranking of Wildlife to be published in 2005, and is consistent with a workplan established for this work and agreed upon by all jurisdictions in Canada.

In the Northwest Territories (NWT), as in the rest of Canada, these ranks are used to provide lists of rare or "may be at risk" species to help in the protection of biodiversity during a wide array of activities including impact assessment of development projects, land use planning, determination of monitoring priorities and general ecological management programs.

The general biological status of all vascular plants should be ranked by December 2004 as part of the workplan on General Status towards the 2005 report. In the NWT, this project aims at drafting ranks of all NWT vascular plants to provide input for a final review of all ranks by all wildlife co-management Boards and by other experts on plants in the NWT.

Update

On 5 January 2004, GNWT issued a contract to Dr. Erich Haber (National Botanical Services), Co-chair of the COSEWIC Plants and Lichen Subcommittee and expert on vascular plants (see attached). With extensive experience in determining the biological status of plants, and with his access to the two main museum collections of northern plant specimen in Canada, Dr. Haber was best placed to provide us with general status ranks for all NWT vascular plants. Dr. Haber also had provided ranks for a first sub-set of NWT plant species in 2003.

The work included a complete verification and update of NWT plant taxonomy (species level), updating the number and geographic location of plants collected in the NWT, listing and evaluating potential threats to each species, describing trends and uncertainties if applicable, providing draft ranks, and providing copies or information on all references used during the work.

There are about 1200 plant species in the NWT. To help manage this large number of species, the work was subdivided into subsets with staggered due dates and a budget for each subset.

1- Monocots – excluding sedges and grasses (done previously 2003)
2- Monocots – all 150 grasses – were ranked by 12 February 2004

3- Monocots – all 70 sedges – were ranked by 30 March 2004
4- Dicots – all families between willows and violets – 500 species to be ranked by 30 September 2004.
5- Dicots – all remaining families – 350 species to be also ranked by 30 September 2004.

The contribution from NWT CIMP was used to cover costs associated with preliminary taxonomic work, literature and collection searches on all subsets, and detailed drafting of ranks for subset 2.

Also as part of this work, GNWT signed a Data-sharing agreement with the Canadian Museum of Nature (CMN) to use all specimen data, including collector's name, date, habitat description, georeferenced location information, for all vascular plants ever collected in the NWT and stored at CMN. This data can be used during environmental assessments, land use reviews, and protected area planning, among other activities.

Next steps

All requested material and information on subsets 2 and 3 were received by GWNT, and will serve to provide official general status ranks for vascular plants in the NWT by 2005. A copy of NWT plant specimen data was received by GNWT on 30 March 2004.