

Deleted from California Rare Plant Rank 2B.2 of the CNPS Inventory on July 26, 2019

Rare Plant Status Review: *Muhlenbergia alopecuroides*

Proposed Deletion from California Rare Plant Rank 2B.2, G5 / S1?

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10 June 2019

Changes made to the original document are in blue text.

Background

Muhlenbergia alopecuroides (Griseb.) P.M. Peterson & Columbus is a perennial herb in the Poaceae that has been included in the CNPS Inventory as a California Rare Plant Rank 2B species since the 4th Edition (Smith and Berg 1988). *Muhlenbergia alopecuroides* previously went under the name *Lycurus phleoides* (misapplied), and is generally known from southwestern United States, south to Baja California and Sonora, Mexico and South America. In California it was known only from San Bernardino County (CNPS 2019).

The only evidence of the presence of *M. alopecuroides* in California comes from letters submitted by Margaret W. Fleisher to CNPS describing a population of two or three plants in good condition along Caruthers Canyon Road in the New York Mountains of San Bernardino County from an observation she made in 1981:

“Caruthers Cnyn Rd-heading North, N.Y. Mts. E. Mojave. Right hand side of road edge ... About 1.5 km from pinyons in "meadow" area. 2- or 3 plants observed in good condition.”

A total of four letters were received by then CNPS botanist Rick York from Margaret in 1983, one from January 28th, and three from May 6th, 11th, and 30th. Her letters indicate her observation of *M. alopecuroides* was reported to, and affirmed by, Robert Thorne at Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden. She specified that a personal collection of the plant was made of inflorescences only (no plant material) that were sent and still on loan to Dr. Thorne at the time. Since no vouchers of *M. alopecuroides* exist at RSA (CCH 2019; SEINet 2019), it's presumed the specimen was eventually sent back to her to house in her personal herbarium.

Although no vouchers of *M. alopecuroides* from California are available, it seems plausible that they existed in Margaret's personal herbarium and that the plant was truly known from California based on material being reviewed and verified by Thorne. However, the May 11th letter received from Margaret indicated that *“The Lycurus appeared to be newly arrived”*, and in her May 30th letter she indicated it *“had a very small population and I felt it was newly arrived ... roadside. The entire area is cattle grazed”*. These later letters appear to clearly indicate that *M. alopecuroides* was, at the time, introduced in California. Jim Andre (pers. comm. 2017) has looked for *M. alopecuroides* at the location reported by Margaret and other areas throughout the New York Mountains for 25 years without relocating it. These ongoing surveys and the letters from Margaret stating that her observation was a new arrival indicate *M. alopecuroides* was a waif and should not be considered a native member of the California flora.

Summary

Based on the available information, CNPS and CNDDDB recommend deleting *Muhlenbergia alopecuroides* from California Rare Plant Rank 2B.2 of the CNPS Inventory and placing it on the Considered But Rejected list as a waif. No voucher specimen exists to confirm the occurrence of this species in California, and ongoing negative findings indicate that the two to three plants previously reported from California represented a waif. If knowledge on the distribution, threats, and rarity status of *M. alopecuroides* changes in the future, we will re-evaluate its status at that time.

Recommended Actions

CNPS: Delete *Muhlenbergia alopecuroides* from 2B.2

CNDDDB: Delete *Muhlenbergia alopecuroides* from G5 / S1?

Current CNPS Inventory Record

Muhlenbergia alopecuroides (Griseb.) P.M. Peterson & Columbus
wolftail

Poaceae

Synonyms/Other Names: *Lycurus phleoides* var. *phleoides*

CRPR 2B.2

San Bernardino

Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Maine, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Utah; Baja California, Sonora, Mexico, South America

Pinto Valley (200A) 3511523

Joshua tree woodland, pinyon and juniper woodland; elevation ?

Perennial herb. Blooms August to September.

Known in CA only from one occurrence in the New York Mtns. Threatened by grazing.

Revised CNPS Inventory Record

Muhlenbergia alopecuroides (Griseb.) P.M. Peterson & Columbus

Changed from 2B.2 to CBR on YYYY/MM/DD

Considered But Rejected: Not native; occurred in CA only as a roadside waif.

Literature Cited

Andre, J. M. 2017. Director, Granite Mountains Desert Research Center, UC Natural Reserve System, UC Riverside. Email regarding status of *Muhlenbergia alopecuroides* in California. Personal communication October 2017.

[CNDDDB] California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDDB). 2019. RareFind 5 [Internet] California Department of Fish and Wildlife [Government Version, May 2019]

[CNPS] California Native Plant Society, Rare Plant Program. 2019. Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (online edition, v8-03 0.39). Website <http://www.rareplants.cnps.org> [accessed May 2019].

[CCH] Consortium of California Herbaria. 2019. Data provided by the participants of the Consortium of California Herbaria. Regents of the University of California, Berkeley. Website <http://ucjeps.berkeley.edu/consortium/> [accessed 24 April 2019].

Flesher, M. W. 1981. Letters mailed to Rick York, CNPS Rare Plant Program.

SEINet. 2019. Symbiota. Website <http://swbiodiversity.org/seinet/index.php> [accessed May 2019].

Smith, J.P., Jr., and K. Berg (eds.). 1988. California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California. Special Publication No. 1 (Fourth Edition). California Native Plant Society, Sacramento. 168 pp.