

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 7/3/2023 9:56:20 PM

First name: Anita

Last name: Vasquez

Organization:

Title:

Comments: Hiker's Gentian, an extremely vulnerable and sensitive flower species in the plan area is of limited distribution. It is highly threatened by hikers, horses and dogs stepping over, killing and leading to future population decline. Predicted, suitable habitat exists for the species in LNF planning area. Relative density in the SW plan area (MHP) is quite small and they can easily compare to common Gentian population. Hiker's Gentian species do not tolerate disturbance in their ecological balance (Montana Heritage) decreasing their chances of surviving forest habitat disruptions; one of the main reasons to relist them as SOC as this is evidence of this potential threat in itself. More studies are needed to document their existence in other habitats, but their present extremely vulnerable populations in themselves warrant listing. Existing threats to Montana Hiker's Gentian should not be listed as unknown (MTNHP threat assessment 2021) just because SOME of these known threats have not been fully assessed. Hiker's Gentian very limited, declining populations vulnerable to extinction in their present mountain habitats, especially specific moist mounting habitats.

Hiker's Gentian attracts Bumble bees like the sensitive Western Bumblebee which are able to manipulate petals easily to get nectar easily (www.sare.org, pollinators by wind and animals). Bumble bees are important forest plant pollinators. In turn, Hiker's Gentian pollen will be distributed by the bees possibly increasing genetic diversity; beneficial to LNF Hiker's Gentian population. (I do not have exact locations of Western Bumblebees in terms of overlapping with Hiker's Gentian population.)