

NAVAJO SEDGE
(Carex specuicola)

STATUS: Threatened (50 FR 19370, May 8, 1985) with critical habitat.

SPECIES DESCRIPTION: A member of the sedge family (Cyperaceae), this grass-like plant reaches a height of 25.4-40.6 cm (10-16 in). Numerous stems grow from a rhizome (underground stem), giving each plant a clumped form. Each plant has both male and female flowers, the male flowers occurring only on the ends of stems and the female flowers occurring below the male flowers or in spikes on the sides of stems.

HABITAT: Seep-springs on vertical cliffs of pink-red Navajo sandstone at 1,740-1,830 m (5,700-6,000 ft) elevation. These drainages are spectacular examples of the deep, sheer-walled canyons of the Colorado Plateau geographic region. The plant community inhabiting the vertical seeps includes monkey flower and orchid.

RANGE: Current: Formerly known only from a few localities in the Navajo Creek drainage (Cococino County), recent surveys have documented Navajo sedge in other drainage systems in Apache and Navajo Counties. Navajos living in the Navajo Creek area recall the presence of Navajo sedge in areas where it is not found today. Recently, a population was found in San Juan County, Utah.

Potential: Surveys for this species are incomplete. Navajo sedge might be located in the general regional area of Arizona and Utah, in seep-springs on canyon walls of Navajo sandstone or other similar eolian sandstone formations.

REASONS FOR DECLINE / VULNERABILITY: The specialized and limited available habitat make this species vulnerable to threats, including livestock grazing and trampling (at accessible sites) and the potential for habitat loss due to underground water pumping.

LAND MANAGEMENT / OWNERSHIP: Navajo Nation.

NOTES: Recovery Plan approved 1987. A copy of the recovery plan is available online at: http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/arizona/Documents/RecoveryPlans/Navajo_Sedge_RP.pdf

Critical habitat is on the Navajo Nation in Cococino County and contains three groups of springs near Inscription House Ruins (see 50 FR 19370 for details).

Protected by the Arizona Native Plant Law and the Navajo Nation.