

-State Species Abstract-
-Wyoming Natural Diversity Database-

PENSTEMON ABSAROKENSIS
ABSAROKA BEARDTONGUE
Family: Scrophulariaceae

Status:

US Fish & Wildlife Service: None.
Agency Status: WY BLM Sensitive
USFS R2 sensitive

Heritage Rank:

Global: G2 State: S2
WYNDD Plant List: State endemic
(Medium conservation priority)

Description: Absaroka beardtongue is a perennial herb with several stems growing to 18 cm tall. The leaves are elliptic to ovate, somewhat fleshy, slightly glossy, and 2.5-9 cm long and 7-25 mm wide. Young leaves are often purplish. The inflorescence is leafy and somewhat one-sided with flowers crowded toward the tip. Each cyme making up the inflorescence has 2-8 flowers. The corollas are purplish-blue, 14-33 mm long, and have bright blue mouths. Sepals are 7-12 mm long with long-tapering tips equaling or longer than the ragged-margined basal portion. Sepals and flower stalks are often glandular (Evert 1984; Marriott 1988; Dorn 1992).

Similar Species: *Penstemon glaber* var. *glaber*, *P. subglaber*, and *P. cyaneus* typically have shorter sepals with a short pointed tip smaller than the broad basal portion.

Flowering/Fruiting Period: mid-June through mid-July.

Distribution: State Endemic; known only from the Absaroka Range of northwest Wyoming in Park County. An isolated

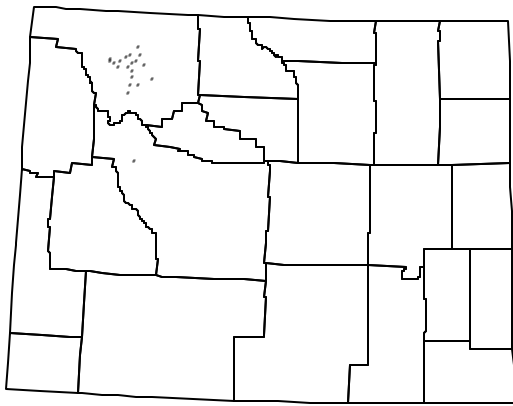


Above and below: *Penstemon absarokensis* by Walter Fertig.



population from the northeast Wind River Range in Fremont County may represent a different, undescribed taxon according to Dorn (1989).

Habitat: On loose, volcanic, rocky soils and scree along sparsely vegetated slopes, rocky ridges, and creek bottoms at 5920-10000 feet. Plants usually occur on very barren, steep slopes with little competition from other vegetation.



Wyoming distribution of *P. absarokensis*.

Occurrences in Wyoming: 20 occurrences are currently recognized, all of which have been observed since 1984 (12 have been surveyed since 1996). Dorn recognized only 2 extensive populations in his 1989 status survey for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The single Fremont County occurrence may represent a different taxon (Dorn 1989).

Abundance: Dorn estimated the population at over 2000 for his 2 extensive occurrences in the Absarokas. More recent field work by Fertig suggests that this species may be more abundant, numbering in the range of 8000-15000. Individual populations are often exceedingly small and restricted to areas of suitable micro-habitat.

Trends: Population size may vary from year to year based on moisture availability, but long-term trends have not been studied.

Protection Status: At least 9 occurrences are protected within the Washakie and Northern Absaroka Wilderness areas. Populations are also found in the potential Grizzly Creek and Sheep Mesa Research Natural Areas.

Threats: Most populations are unthreatened due to the ruggedness of their habitat. Populations near trails may be impacted by recreational activities and competition from weeds. It remains to be determined whether this species can persist in such sites or is actually able to colonize disturbed areas.

Managed Areas: Occurs on lands managed by the Shoshone National Forest, BLM Cody Field Office, and the Wind River Indian Reservation.

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