**Spiranthes porrifolia** Lindl.
synonym: *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* Cham. var. *porrifolia* (Lindl.) Ames & Correll
western ladies' tresses
Orchidaceae - orchid family
status: State Sensitive, BLM sensitive, USFS sensitive
rank: G4 / S2

**General Description:** Hairless perennial 1-6 dm tall. Leaves 3-5, linear
to narrowly oblong, basal or on lower stem, sometimes absent or
withered at flowering time, up to 34 x 3.5 cm, transitioning to short
bracts above.

**Floral Characteristics:** Terminal spike with up to 40 flowers forming a
dense, tight spiral. Main flowering stem hairless to sparsely hairy; hairs
usually much less than 0.18 mm, capitate, glands often unstalked.
Flowers cream to yellowish or greenish white, slenderly tubular. Sepals
4.6-11 mm, fused at the base, tips free and spreading. Petals
linear-lanceolate to linear-oblanceolate. Lowest petal (lip) lance-ovate
to lanceolate, 4-9.5 x 2-4.3 mm, inner surface with dense cushion of
peg-shaped outgrowths. Flowers May to August.

**Fruits:** Capsules.

**Identification Tips:** *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* has white to cream-colored
flowers with lower lips that are smooth on the inner surface and
violin-shaped (constricted below the tip), and with sepals and petals
fused into a curved tubular hood. *S. diluvialis* has white to ivory flowers
that are not tubular; its lip prominently diverges from the sepals and
petals and lacks peg-shaped outgrowths on the inner surface; and it has
obviously stalked glands on the stem of the inflorescence. In general, *S.
porrifolia* flowers several months earlier (May to August) than *S.
romanzoffiana* (July to October) or *S. diluvialis* (July to September).

**Range:** WA to southern CA, ID, NV.

**Habitat/Ecology:** Wet meadows, bogs, streams, and seepage slopes.
Elevations in WA: 3-2075 m (10-6800 ft). Associated species include
sedges (*Carex* spp.), white brodiaea (*Triteleia hyacinthina*), and seep
monkeyflower (*Mimulus guttatus*). Some *Spiranthes* may persist
underground for several years before emerging.

**Comments:** This taxon is also rare in ID. Surveys of potential habitat
should be conducted for multiple years due to the species' tendency for
prolonged dormancy.

**References:** Flora of North America 1993+, vol. 26; Luer 1975;
Williams & Williams 1983.

Adapted from *Field Guide to the Rare Plants of Washington*
http://www.washington.edu/uwpress/search/books/CAMFIE.html