

Re: SB 5502 ODA Budget
Thursday February 28, 2013

Attention: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Natural Resources

The Board of the Native Plant Society of Oregon (NPSO) representing nearly 1000 members strongly objects to a proposal by the Oregon Department of Agriculture to cut all ODA funding for the Native Plant Conservation Program (Policy Package 330 in ODA Budget Submission for 2013-2015). NPSO is a statewide organization that is dedicated to the enjoyment, conservation and study of Oregon's native plants and habitats. NPSO played a major role in the establishment of the Plant Conservation Program by working to pass the Endangered Species Bill that was approved unanimously by the Oregon Legislature in 1987. The Bill (Oregon Senate Bill 533 and its corresponding Oregon Revised Statute, ORS 564) directed the State Department of Agriculture to conserve and protect those native plant species facing threats to their survival and established the program in 1988.

If this cut to the Native Plant Conservation Program is enacted by the Legislature, the result will be that all State supported work on Oregon's threatened and endangered plant species will cease to exist. This program has provided needed oversight to the regulatory aspect of the State law passed in 1987. This will leave state agencies with no help on issues pertaining to threatened and endangered plant species. The Native Plant Conservation Program provides oversight and regulatory assistance to many agencies in the state. If state funding is cut to this program there will be no implementation of the regulatory issues of the law and it will put a burden on other state agencies to comply with the law.

The Plant Conservation Program is the only legislatively authorized entity that deals with threatened and endangered rare plants in Oregon and is the only agency that is able to determine such status. The program works with governmental agencies, both state and federal, non-governmental organizations and individuals to conserve Oregon's rare native plants. A complete cut in funding by the Department of Agriculture will send a very strong message that Oregon does not care about plant conservation and does not actively support its claim of being a Green State. Granting agencies check for matching funds when making decisions on funding projects. The absence of any State funds for a State Program in a State Agency will not provide a positive message, instead it sends a message that "Oregon is not prepared to support its own legislative mandate for plant conservation". Although the program might attempt to remain in existence solely on grant funds, such funds will be less likely without base funding. Further, expenditures from granted funds would be strictly limited to granted purposes preventing the program from fulfilling its roles in oversight, coordination, and review of potential candidate species for state listing as threatened and endangered.

The Native Plant Society of Oregon believes that the state should protect its rare plants for present and future generations by supporting the Native Plant Conservation Program - -- the only state program working for conservation of threatened and endangered plants.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Sincerely,

Judi Sanders
President, Native Plant Society of Oregon

Billy Don Robinson
Vice-President and Legislative Chair, Native Plant Society of Oregon

Esther McEvoy
Former Native Plant Society of Oregon Legislative Chair and author of the 1987 State Endangered Species Bill