



SISKIYOU CHAPTER

Native Plant Society of Oregon

*Dedicated to the enjoyment, conservation, and study
or Oregon's native vegetation*

The Honorable Senator Betsy Johnson, Co-Chair
The Honorable Senator Elizabeth Steiner Hayward, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Dan Rayfield, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairpersons,

April 20, 2021

Re: Funding for the Oregon Native Plant Conservation Program

The **Siskiyou Chapter Native Plant Society of Oregon** respectfully requests the Native Plant Conservation Program be fully funded through the General Fund in order to meet state obligations for native plant consultations and permitting. This would reverse the previous fund shift from General Fund to Federal Funds, which fails to fund the Native Plant Conservation Program's state obligations.

SCNPSO is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation based in Ashland, Oregon. We formed for charitable, educational and scientific purposes, namely the preservation, conservation, and study of the native plants and vegetation of Oregon, and public education about the values of native flora and its habitat.

We ask for \$204,722 from the General Fund and/or Lottery Funds for the 2021-2023 Native Plant Conservation Program. Those funds should be used only for work on State Plant Conservation Projects and updating the list of Oregon Threatened and Endangered Candidate Species.

Alexis Taylor, ODA Director, sums up important work of the Native Plant Conservation Program as follows:

"The Native Plant Conservation program assists public agencies and private citizens with management issues involving native threatened and endangered plants on non-federal public lands. The program also propagates threatened and endangered (T&E) plants in Oregon, establishes voluntary partnerships with federal, state, local, and tribal governments as well as private land owners to restore and enhance plant populations, and

conducts monitoring of T&E plant populations. The program also assists public land managers in complying with Oregon's T&E plant laws and rules...

General Fund support is crucial for maintaining the legislatively mandated mission (ORS 564.105–115) of the Native Plant Program, in particular reviewing consultation requests from state and local public agencies, periodically reviewing the list of T&E plant species, and implementing conservation efforts for endangered plant species. There are currently 17 active state projects that are dependent on the return of state funding back to the program."

The ODA Native Plant Conservation Program was mandated by the unanimous passage of the 1987 State Endangered Species law to protect Oregon's rare plant species. The mandates are currently not being met due to a lack of funding through the General Fund.

Due to the lack of funding, Oregon is not meeting its obligation to update the state rare plant list, to provide consultation and scientific take and recovery permits involving state listed plant species, and to protect our rare species. In the last ten years, the legislature has only twice given General Fund money for the program.

The Native Plant Conservation Program only has funding from the Federal Fund, so it can ONLY work on federally listed plant species at this time because there is no state funding for the program to work on state listed species.

The Siskiyou Chapter Native Plant Society of Oregon is concerned about the loss of the biodiversity of our native plants, especially of our rare plants. Many plant species are on the brink of extinction, or the insects that rely on them are going extinct as their larval host plants dwindle. Protecting Oregon's native plant biodiversity is key in fighting the climate and extinction crisis.

There is still no State funding for the Oregon Native Plant Conservation Program in the current Governor's Recommended Budget (SB 5502).

As result of the loss of State Funding for the Native Plant Conservation Program:

- the Oregon List of Threatened and Endangered Species has not been updated since 1988;
- some species on the currently outdated list have healthy populations and are candidates to be removed from State Threatened and Endangered Species list;
- there new species that are candidates for listing as Threatened or Endangered and should be given that status;
- threatened and endangered species consultation for state projects is not occurring;
- there are currently 17 active state projects that are dependent on the return of state funding back to the program

According to Lisa Blackburn's (NPSO) November 06, 2019 letter to the Oregon Department of Agriculture, "At least one example of a project that NPSO was directly involved in getting state funding for specifically during the last budget cycle (July 1, 2017 to June 30, 2019) was for updating the state listing status of plant species that are

considered threatened or endangered species. At this time, all that is left is for the rulemaking process to be completed. ODA made their recommendations for updating the state list in 2018 and received (and closed) public comments in January 2019. As you may know, this critical component of plant conservation has not been updated since its original iteration was completed in 1988 even though, by law (ORS 496.176 (8)), it is to be periodically reviewed every 5-years. Without state funding, this cannot be completed. Additionally, if this cannot be completed under the current budget cycle (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021) and must wait until the next budget cycle (July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023), that leaves the existing work that has been completed rather stale and perhaps in need of updating."

Staffing for the Native Plant Conservation Program is down to essentially one-person; however, one person cannot cover the entire duties of the Program. General Fund monies need to be allocated to hire a new Director of the Native Plant Conservation Program after the retirement of program coordinator, Bob Meinke.

Again, we ask for \$204,722 from the General Fund and/or Lottery Funds for the 2021-2023 Native Plant Conservation Program. Those funds should be used only for work on State Plant Conservation Projects and updating the list of Oregon Threatened and Endangered Candidate Species.

We also encourage you to keep all programs addressing noxious weeds fully funded, as noxious weeds are a continuous and serious threat to Oregon's native flora and rare plants. Please do not move money out of the noxious weed program and put them into the hemp program.

Sincerely,



Suzie Savoie
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