

Center  
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California  
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# Native Plant Conservation Campaign

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## **\*\*NATIVE PLANTS CONFRONT SERIOUS BARRIERS IN\*\* CONSERVATION, STUDY REVEALS**

Today the Native Plant Conservation Campaign released "*Barriers to Native Plant Conservation in the United States: Funding, Staffing, Law*", a special report focusing on the effectiveness of conservation programs for native plants and their habitats. The report revealed serious inadequacies in funding, staffing and legal protection within the agencies and programs that are supposed to protect the nation's more than 5,000 imperiled native plants.

"Unfortunately, plants are second class conservation citizens in the United States", said Dr. Emily Roberson, Director of the Campaign. "Only a fraction of the time and money expended on biological diversity conservation is allocated to plants. Understaffing for botany programs in agencies such as the Bureau of Land Management is acute and pervasive. Even our endangered species laws provide inferior protection for plants than for other species."

Among the report's key findings:

- Only 4% of the total spending on recovery of endangered species is allocated to endangered native plants.
- Imperiled plants are approximately half as likely to receive protection under the federal Endangered Species Act as imperiled animals.
- The Bureau of Land Management employs only 68 botanists to manage botanical resources on its 264 million acres (1 botanist for every 4 million acres under its management).
- The U.S. Forest Service employs almost 3,000 foresters, who focus on the small subset of plants used for commercial timber production. At the same time, only 128 botanists are employed nationwide to conserve all other plant species.
- The federal Endangered Species Act provides much weaker protection for listed plants than for listed animals. Although it is always illegal to kill federally listed animals, the law allows knowing destruction of many federally listed plants - even to the point of extinction.

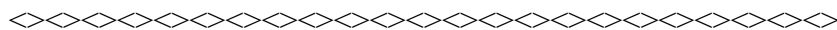
The report also provides an overview of the importance of native plants to ecosystem conservation and discusses the role of native plants in supporting the economy. It also reviews the many perils facing native plants from increasing habitat fragmentation, invasive non native weeds, pests, and diseases such as sudden oak death.

"Plants are the foundations of ecosystems" said Dr. Susan Britting, President of the California Native Plant Society. "They produce foods, fibers and medicines that sustain our economies. They generate the oxygen we breathe. They provide food and shelter for wildlife. They are also at increasing risk from habitat destruction, pollution, invasive species, and neglect. It is surprising that as we enter a new millennium, our knowledge of the importance and imperilment of native plants is still not reflected in our conservation programs and policies."

"We hope this study will call attention to these long overlooked issues so that we can begin effectively to address them" said Peter Galvin of the Center for Biological Diversity. "Science and commonsense tell us that we cannot conserve the native wildlife and wild places that Americans value so highly without conserving the native plants they depend on. Our laws and budgets must reflect these basic scientific facts."

The report also presents a seven point plan to begin to correct the deficiencies it identifies in laws and programs for plant conservation. The recommendations include increased botany staffing for federal agencies, increased funding for recovery of listed plants, and strengthening the federal Endangered Species Act to provide equal protection for plants and animals.

"We are working with elected officials, agencies, and leaders in the environmental and scientific communities to raise awareness of these problems and to push for change", said Dr. Roberson. "Now that we have exposed the problems, we can begin to resolve them. The will is there. Polls consistently tell us that Americans want to conserve our natural heritage. We can succeed if agencies, elected officials, and the botanical community work together."



The Native Plant Conservation Campaign (NPCC) is a national network of native plant societies and other native plant conservation organizations. It began operation in January, 2002. The NPCC is a project of the Center for Biological Diversity and the California Native Plant Society, two of the nation's leading scientific and conservation organizations.

The mission of the NPCC is to promote appreciation and conservation of native plant species and communities through collaboration, education, law, policy, land use and management.

In the first half of 2002, the NPCC has already built a network of 14 affiliates, representing more than 52,000 native plant conservation advocates in 18 states. This report is the first of a series of special publications that will examine key issues in native plant conservation.