



Center
for
Biological
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California
Native
Plant
Society

Native Plant Conservation Campaign

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Testimony of
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Regarding

Botany Programs of the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service, the Recovery Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Control of Invasive Non-Native Species, the Native Plant Materials Development Program, and Non-Timber Forest Products Management.

March 13, 2006

The Native Plant Conservation Campaign (NPCC) is a nationwide network of native plant science and conservation organizations. The NPCC is a project of the Center for Biological Diversity and the California Native Plant Society. The NPCC network includes 34 affiliate native plant societies, botanic gardens, museums, and arboreta, representing more than 60,000 scientists and laypersons nationwide. NPCC members rely on public lands and botanical resources for education, research, and recreation. The NPCC requests that Congress augment the budget of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) by \$21,126,613 and that of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) by \$15,516,977 to adequately staff botany programs within these agencies. We further request a minimum of \$113 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) Recovery budget to begin to address the backlog in recovery plan development and implementation, and \$14.4 million for invasive non-native plant inventory and control. Finally we request \$15 million for the BLM and USFS Native Plant Materials Development Program and a new line item for the Forest Service and BLM to manage non-timber products such as herbs and mushrooms.

BACKGROUND

A. Land Management Agency Staffing

America's native plants and public lands are central to the nation's quality of life and economic well being. Unfortunately, land management agencies do not employ enough botanists to manage and protect adequately our flora. Nationwide, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employs approximately 60 botanists to manage vegetation on its 264 million acres (1 botanist/4.3 million ac.). The U.S. Forest Service (USFS) employs approximately 200 botanists across 191 million acres of National Forests (1 botanist/1.1 million ac.).

This is a serious problem. The health of native vegetation controls the quality and quantity of goods, services and enjoyment that Americans derive from our public lands. Second, butterflies, trout, songbirds and all native wildlife that the public so much enjoys require healthy native plant communities for survival. Third, species conservation, recreation, commodity production and all other programs require input and review from qualified botanists to avoid resource damage, controversy and litigation. National Forests, for example, provide habitat for nearly 2,000 "sensitive" plants, any of which may become eligible for federal listing if mismanaged. Staffing levels are inadequate to meet agencies' duties to taxpayers, the law, and the needs of our resources.

Promoting appreciation and conservation of native plant species and communities through collaboration, education, law, policy, land use and management

B. Recovery

Recovery of imperiled species and their removal from the federal endangered species list is the primary goal of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Unfortunately, the President’s 2007 budget request *reduces recovery funding by more than 10%*. Further, although over 60 % of federal endangered species are plants, according to the FWS in FY 2000, less than 4% of federal recovery funding went to listed plants. Thus, most plant recovery plans are not only inadequately implemented, many are not implemented at all. The FWS has a science-based recovery ranking system for listed species and a priority system for recovery tasks. We suggest that this system be used as the basis for more equitable recovery budgeting.

C. Invasive Non-Native Species

Invasive non-native species cause up to \$123 billion in economic losses in the United States each year. Scientists implicate non-native species in the decline of 49% of federally listed species (57% of listed plants). According to the BLM, invasive non-native plants (weeds) already dominate at least 17 million acres of federal lands. These infestations reduce the value of our public lands for recreation, wildlife, and livestock. They also often cause other problems such as reduced water supply and increased fire danger. Agencies must be adequately funded to prevent and control invasive non-native species infestations.

D. Native Plant Materials Development Program – BLM Wildland Fire Management Budget

The purpose of this program is to develop seed of local native plants to be used for restoration and revegetation projects on federal lands. The use of native plant materials ensures sustainable, successful revegetation and restoration of public lands, helps maintain local biological diversity, and maintains a sustainable flow of goods and services from public lands.

E. Non timber forest products,

As demand rises, conservation of mushrooms, lichens, and plants used for dyes, herbal medicines, and other purposes is an increasing burden on land management agencies. A separate line item for their management and protection should be added to this budget so that agencies can adequately protect these species and their habitats.

REQUEST

A. Land Management Agency Staffing

The following augmentations are the minimum necessary to begin to move the agencies towards adequate botany staffing:

- Each USFS Ranger District should be staffed with at least one full time series 430 botanist.
- There are 156 BLM field offices. Their areas of responsibility vary from several thousand to several million acres. BLM nationwide should employ one series 430 botanist for each 500,000 acres under management. Botanists should be distributed based on local workloads. At minimum, each BLM field office should be staffed with one full time botanist.

Based on a 2006, GS-11 Step 1 base salary with no locality adjustment (\$45,239/yr), these staff levels would require the following budget augmentations:

Agency	Current FTEs	FTE Goal	Needed	Additional Cost (vs. current)
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budget)

USFS	200	543 (1 FTE per Ranger District)	343	\$15,516,977.00
BLM	61	528 (1 FTE per 0.5 million acres)	467	\$21,126,613.00
TOTAL				\$36,643,590.00

B. Recovery

We request that Congress fully fund FWS recovery plans for FY 2007 for plants and animals with High Recovery Potential and a High or Moderate degree of Threat, according to the FWS priority ranking system. For lower ranked species, we request that Priority 1 recovery actions identified in recovery plans be funded for FY 2007. Priority 1 actions are defined by FWS as *actions needed to prevent extinction*.

We do not have the FWS recovery budget requests for the species that fall into these categories. However, recent scientific studies based on the FWS priority system and species status recommended an augmentation of \$300 million above current annual recovery spending. This augmentation would certainly improve recovery success under the ESA. Given current budget constraints, we request a recovery budget of at least **\$113 million** for the FY FWS recovery program.

C. Invasive non-native species

The BLM received \$7.7 million in FY 04 for control and inventory of invasive non-native plants nationwide. The agency estimated it required approximately \$16 million to adequately meet needs for FY 05. That was a budget augmentation of **\$8.3 million**. We do not have FY 06 figures. Region 5 of the USFS has estimated that an additional \$700,000/yr is needed to meet regional weed control needs for FY 06. Based on the assumptions that that these estimates are constant and that all 10 USFS regions need at least that amount, we request a budget augmentation of **\$7 million** for USFS non-native plant inventory and control programs service-wide. Total FY 2007 request for **BLM + Forest Service = \$15.4 million** over FY 05 budget

D. Native Plant Materials Development

The BLM has a strategic plan for the further development of this program. The Plan recommends increasing the program budget to \$13 million in FY 2007. We recommend that the program receive \$20 million because it has already been extremely successful and is growing in popularity and effectiveness.

E. Non-timber Forest Products

Agencies should be asked to develop proposals for adequate funding for these programs.

We hope that you will take these proposals and issues into account as you formulate budgets for FY 2007 and beyond. Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Sincerely,



Emily B. Roberson, Ph.D.
Director

**NATIVE PLANT CONSERVATION CAMPAIGN
Affiliate and Cooperating Organizations**

NPCC Affiliates	NPCC Cooperators
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum	Botresearch USA
Arizona Native Plant Society	CalFlora Database
Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI)	California Trout
California Native Plant Society	Center for Native Ecosystems
California Oak Foundation	Defenders of Wildlife
Center for Biological Diversity	Endangered Species Coalition
Colorado Native Plant Society	Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics
Florida Native Plant Society	Pacific Rivers Council
Grand Prairie Friends of Illinois	PlantaEuropa
Herb Society of America	PlantLife, UK
Idaho Native Plant Society	Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
Iowa Native Plant Society	T&E Inc.
Kauai Native Plant Society	Xerces Society
Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center	
Maryland Native Plant Society	
Minnesota Native Plant Society	
Missouri Native Plant Society	
Montana Native Plant Society	
Native Plant Society of New Jersey	
Native Plant Society of New Mexico	
Native Plant Society of Northeastern Ohio	
Native Plant Society of Oregon	
New England Wild Flower Society (NH, CT, RI, MA, ME, VT)	
New Mexico Rare Plant Technical Council	
North Carolina Botanical Garden	
North Carolina Wild Flower Preservation Society	
Oklahoma Native Plant Society	
South Carolina Native Plant Society	
Ticonderoga Arboretum and Botanical Gardens, VA	
Utah Native Plant Society	
Virginia Native Plant Society	
Washington Native Plant Society	
West Virginia Native Plant Society	
Wyoming Native Plant Society	