

In addition to our National Endangered Species Act, 46 States have comparable State Endangered Species Laws. It is Oregon State policy "to prevent the serious depletion of any indigenous species" (ORS 496.012). In 1987 the Oregon Legislature enacted the Oregon Endangered Species Act (ESA) [ORS 496.171 to 496.192, 498.026, and 564.100 to 564.135].

The Oregon administrative rules for threatened and endangered (T&E) species are intended to help implement these policies. In accordance with these rules, species can be classified as "threatened" (any native species likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout any significant part of its range within the state) or "endangered" (any native species determined to be in danger of extinction).

The rules also identify general steps that may be taken to recover these species. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife maintains a list of threatened and endangered animal species. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) maintains a list of threatened and endangered plant species. The state ESA requires state agencies to develop programs for the management and protection of endangered species on state lands. For threatened species, state agencies are required to comply with recommended survival guidelines.

The ODA's Native Plant Conservation Program (NPCP) has not been responsibly funded to fulfill its obligation to update the State Rare Plant List, to provide consultation and scientific take and recovery permits involving State listed plant species, or to protect our rare species. The recent retirement of the program's director was not filled and the current staffing is not adequate to support the program.

SB 5502, the DOA Budget for the Native Plant Conservation Program, is deceiving. For the past 7 years the funding for the program has been essentially "Federal and Other Funds". Federal funds can only be used on federally-listed plant species and projects associated with those species. Without some level of state funding, those plant species and projects that involve State Listed only species are not being worked on by the NPCP.

The following is a direct quote from ODA Director, Alexis Taylor's January 15, 2000 letter to the Co-Chairpersons of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means:

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."

Over the years, hundreds of volunteer hours by Native Plant Society of Oregon (NPSO) members from throughout the State has gone into the development of the initial State Lists of rare, threatening, and endangered plant species in Oregon. Recently, the NPCP started a project in 2017 to update the State listing status of T&E species. That work has not been completed due to insufficient funding and staffing at the NPCP. The State List has not been updated since its original inception in 1988. By law (ORS 496.176 (8)), the State List is to be periodically reviewed every 5-years.

For the 2021-2023 ODA Budget the Joint Was and Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources should recommended that the Oregon Native Plant Conservation Program receive \$204,722 from the General Fund and/or Lottery Funds. Those funds to be used only for work on State Plant Conservation Projects and updating the State List of Oregon Threatened and Endangered Candidate Species.

It is past time for the current Governor and Legislators to honor their duty and to act responsibly "to prevent the serious depletion of any indigenous species" (ORS 496.012), [ORS 496.171- 496.192, 498.026, and 564.100 to 564.135].