



Submitted by: Kathryn L. Kennedy, PhD., Executive Director , March 19,2010

The Honorable James Moran
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Prepared for: Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies

Addressing: Department of Interior Appropriations for Listing, Candidate Conservation, and Recovery Programs of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; The Land and Water Conservation Fund; The Interagency Native Plant Materials Development Program; the Plant Conservation program in the Bureau of Land Management; the Endangered Species Program Funding in the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service; and the State Wildlife Grant Program.

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We generally support the section 300 budget request, but feel strongly additional funds are needed in critical areas. We request your attention to **allocate increased funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund to put it on tract to reach full funding within 3 years.** We respectfully request increased appropriations **to a minimum of 100 million in funding for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Recovery Program budget, including 5 million** to help address the imbalance in funding for recovery implementation for plants, **an additional 40 million dollars in the USFWS listing budget** to help clear the listing backlog of candidate species in the next few years, **and an additional 10 million dollars in the Candidate Conservation program** to help fund interim recovery work for those species awaiting listing. **We request an additional \$10 million dollars for the BLM Native Plant Materials Development Program and \$5 million dollars for the U.S. Forest Service Native Plant Materials Development Program.** In addition we request **\$5 million dollars in increased funding for the Endangered Species program in the Bureau of Land Management and in the U.S. Forest Service** to begin to address dramatically increasing plant conservation needs. We also appeal to the Subcommittee to **add the Endangered Species Act to the authorizing legislation in appropriations language for the State Wildlife Grant Program,** thus supplementing the current definition of wildlife (which excludes plants leaving out thousands of at risk species).

The Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) is a conservation organization whose mission is to conserve and restore the rare native plants of the United States to prevent their extinction. We are a coordinated, science-based network of 36 botanical institutions working for the recovery of our most imperiled native species on public and private lands

nationwide. Our network has a wealth of expertise and experience. We often work cooperatively with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture ARS, and National Park Service, and implement about \$10 million in plant recovery research and restoration annually.

In spite of our challenging economy, conserving and restoring these plant resources has never been more critical than now, as we try to prepare for the challenges quickly emerging from climate change. Work must increase now to show needed results in building the resilience we need to keep our landscapes productive, both on the landscape level through the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and through species recovery action. We rely on our public agencies as administrators of our public natural resource laws, and stewards of our public land plant trust resources. Public lands are instrumental in maintaining healthy environmental systems and serve as a primary source of the increasingly valuable natural resource our plant biodiversity represents for the nation.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

A critical strategy in meeting the challenges of climate change is to build resilience within our wild species populations and to ensure habitat connections to provide avenues for responses in species and community ranges over the landscape. The Land and Water Conservation Fund (Fund) is a critical resource for the nation to maintain habitat continuity and address fragmentation obstacles. **We request that the committee recommend an increased allocation for this year and a future funding plan to bring the Fund to full funding within three years.** It is critical for this funding to be available quickly, given the timeframe needed to complete transactions and implement landscape activities in time to be available as needed.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Endangered Species Program

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Endangered Species Program is seriously understaffed and underfunded, denying assistance to the nation's species that can least afford to wait. We request an increased appropriation of **40 million dollars in the USFWS listing budget** to help clear the listing backlog of candidate species in the next few years, **and an additional 10 million dollars in the Candidate Conservation program** to help fund interim recovery work for those species awaiting listing, some for nearly 20 years.

The backlog of work needed to properly respond to recovery needs for all federally listed species has been estimated to be well over \$300 million. The situation is especially precarious for our listed plant species. While 57% of the federally listed species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) are plants, they historically receive only 3-5% of federal agency expenditures for listed species recovery. Our research has demonstrated that approximately 75% of our federally listed plant species have fewer than 100 individuals remaining in the majority of remaining sites, and are at a high risk of extinction within 20-25 years unless intervention is initiated quickly.

While the work of the Center for Plant Conservation and others render tremendously valuable public benefits in recovery efforts for our most imperiled plants, it is clear private efforts alone cannot accomplish the work needed. Federal partnerships and leadership are needed. More botanists and more dollars for recovery actions are needed.

Plant conservation work needed has become critical and cannot be totally deferred until more prosperous times. It is important to get started again now. These species are not only invaluable

for ecological reasons, supporting healthy air and water and mediating global climate change. Given the high natural resource value of our wild plants for emerging biotechnology and traditional economic benefits, these resources are vital to our economic future as well. We have also shown that 87% of federally listed plant species are very closely related to agronomically important species. They are the raw material for plant breeding in support of sustainable agriculture, and potential medically and economically significant products. This long-standing imbalance in recovery funding for plants risks the tragic loss of resources important to the future economic well-being of our nation.

An increase in the **USFWS Recovery Program Budget** is needed to begin to address the most critically imperiled plant and animal species. **We are requesting an appropriation of at least \$100 million for the USFWS Recovery Program Budget.** Further, we believe that within the recovery program **5 million in additional funding should be dedicated to priority listed plant species** for implementation of long neglected recovery activities. **At least \$2 million of this appropriation should be designated for recovery for Hawaiian plant species,** as Hawaii has long been known as our greatest and most imperiled national hotspot for plant biodiversity.

The Interagency Native Plant Materials Development Program

The CPC regards the interagency Native Plant Materials Development Program (NPMD) as one of the most significant public works projects of our times, and has been an active partner since its inception. Program success is contingent on consistent and increased funding. The NPMD program works through the BLM to collect, increase and distribute native plant seed to public and agency partners and private industry for increase and use in federal land restoration efforts. The BLM strategy works with a nationwide collaboration of partners to secure seed, and has engaged many organizations. Positive collaborative partnerships for public lands have been fostered nationwide, and partners have invested over \$5 million of non-federal match, making the program cost effective.

BLM developed a ten-year funding strategy, identifying a relatively modest \$120 million funding need for 2003 – 2012. In spite amazing progress and promise, the BLM's NPMD program remains chronically underfunded, just when it needs to accelerate to fill looming needs. Expanding the variety and quantity of native plant materials will be critical in a reasoned response to climate change, and will add to economic growth by creating new business opportunities for the private sector, reducing cost for federal land restoration, and improving availability for public and private uses. The next few years of funding is critical to realizing the potential benefits. **We request an appropriation of \$10 million dollars for the BLM Native Plant Materials Program appropriation.**

While smaller the US Forest Service (USFS) portion of the program has also made significant progress in developing new stocks for public forest and private benefit. The program is critical as climate change impacts are already well documented on our national forestlands, bring a variety of restoration challenges. **We request funding for the USFS Native Plant Materials Development program as well, in the amount of \$5 million.**

BLM Plant Conservation Program needs

Current energy plans will increase significant disturbance of large areas of BLM lands for energy development. Challenges to the integrity and productivity of BLM lands from invasive species and global climate change have also increased potential impacts to significant numbers of federally listed and BLM special status plant species.

The BLM is one of our largest federal landholders, and therefore one of our most significant agencies in conserving plant biodiversity. The CPC recognizes the leadership of the BLM in

establishing a Plant Conservation Program to take an integrated approach to these significant issues. **The program has proven extremely effective and is deserving of becoming established as a discrete subactivity.**

BLM and USFS Endangered Species Program Funds.

These agencies need increased Endangered Species funding to evaluate impacts, secure wild populations, and plan and implement restoration and management practices to preserve valuable plant biodiversity on the millions of acres of public lands they manage. Additional botanists are needed for BLM field offices, and for our National Forests, where staff shortages are at critical levels.

Funds are also needed to support planning and implementation of identified program needs for federally listed species, as these agencies' landholdings collectively present our most potentially cost effective opportunities for recovery of the nation's listed species. **We request an increase of \$5 million in BLM Endangered Species Program funds** (approximately 2 cents an acre) to help address these critical needs for plants, **and an additional \$5 million in USFS Endangered Species Program funds as well.**

The State Wildlife Grant Program

The State Wildlife Grant Program appropriation is a proactive program to address biodiversity needs at the state level while conservation actions are most cost effective, initiating needed action earlier to preclude the need to list new species under the Endangered Species Act. It is truly a landmark program, and we support full funding.

Unfortunately as currently structured the program is flawed. The current definition of wildlife included in the authorizing legislation in the appropriations language does not include plants, and current guidance does not allow State Wildlife Grant Program funds to be used for projects whose objective is recovery of declining plants. Consequently thousands of at risk plant species cannot directly benefit, and this situation has further aggravated the imbalance in plant conservation resources and activities at the state level, as noted in NatureServe's recent report *Hidden in Plain Sight*, www.natureserve.org/publications/hidden_plain_sight.jsp

This restriction can easily be addressed in a permissive, not dictatorial manner. We appeal to the Subcommittee to **add the Endangered Species Act (ESA) to the authorizing legislation in appropriations language for the State Wildlife Grant Program.** The ESA definition does include plants and would thus broaden the working definitions of wildlife for the program. This change would permit states whose plans identify priority plant conservation needs to use these funds for plant conservation work that can preclude the need to list.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony regarding the proposed Department of Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations. We hope you will be able to respond to these urgent needs for these valuable national resources.

Sincerely,
Kathryn L. Kennedy
President and Executive Director
The Center for Plant Conservation