



Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Native Plant Conservation and the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* (HR3742)

Question: Can funding through the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* be used to conserve rare and imperiled plants?

Answer: Yes. The Act includes the following language that is intended to allow for conservation of native plants: "to recover and manage species of greatest conservation need and the key habitats and plant community types essential to the conservation of those species as determined by the appropriate State fish and wildlife department;" (Page 11, lines 18-23; HR3742). Further, the definition of "Species of Greatest Conservation Need" (SGCN) is defined as "the meaning given to it by each State fish and wildlife department" and does not limit SGCNs to fauna (HR3742, ANS; page 8, lines 17-21).

Question: How do states currently address rare and imperiled plants in their conservation actions and State Wildlife Action Plans?

Answer: All 50 states conduct habitat conservation programs that provide direct benefits for plant species, including declining, rare, and legally protected plants. Funding from State and Tribal Wildlife Grants (SWG) or Wildlife Restoration programs can be used to conserve rare and imperiled plants by managing or restoring plant communities that are important to animal SGCN. Other funding, including Cooperative Endangered Species Program funds, other federal grants, state funds, and private grants also may be used directly for plant conservation projects. Funding from *the Recovering America's Wildlife Act* would increase states' habitat conservation actions exponentially as well as free up other funding to work specifically on rare plant recovery programs.

Question: What are some examples of projects that have used SWG funding to conserve imperiled plants?

Answer: States and territories cannot devote SWG funds to grants that focus solely on plant species; however, funds can be used to conserve plant populations and collect plant data in conjunction with conservation efforts for one or more SGCN animals. The Georgia Wildlife Resources Division has used SWG program funds to conduct surveys, do management, and protect land for federally endangered Canby's dropwort, dwarf sumac, hairy rattletweed, and other imperiled plant species. The agency also has implemented large-scale grassland restoration projects, establishing native seed genotypes that are used to augment restoration activities at multiple sites. Missouri manages glades and prairies that directly benefit populations of federally listed plants including Geocarpon, Missouri bladderpod, Eastern & Western prairie fringed orchid, and Mead's milkweed. Missouri also has conducted large-scale prairie reconstructions with local ecotype seed and has established Mead's milkweed populations in some of these. New Hampshire contributes SWG funds to support a position at the NH Natural Heritage Bureau to assist with database management needs and Wildlife Action Plan implementation. The NH Fish and Game Department also incorporated rare plants and exemplary natural communities into its Wildlife Action Plan Map process that prioritizes areas of the state for land acquisition/restoration, resulting in protection of over 400,000 acres since 2006. These types of projects would also likely be eligible for funding under the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act*.

Question: Can rare and imperiled plants be included in State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) as Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN)?

Answer: Yes, 16 states and 3 U.S. territories currently include plants as SGCN in their SWAPs. Over 4,300 plant species are listed as SGCN in SWAPs, approximately 31% of the total SGCNs. Many other states address conservation needs of native plants and plant communities in the habitat sections of their SWAPs. According to federal guidelines, each SWAP must include descriptions of locations and relative condition of key habitats and community types essential to conservation of species identified as SGCN. Plant species are often key indicators of habitat condition, can be used to describe and delineate the habitats and communities that are important to animal SGCN, and are integrated into habitat restoration efforts.

Question: Why is there not more specific language related to plant conservation in the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act*?

Answer: Provisions in the Act have been carefully negotiated to gain the greatest bipartisan support. Since authorities over plants vary by state (e.g., in some states the Department of Agriculture may have authority over plants), allocations of formula funding would be complicated and potentially directed away from high priority habitat and plant community conservation activities in certain states if plants were specifically included with animals.

Question: Isn't more funding needed for the recovery of federally threatened and endangered plants?

Answer: Yes. However, since the *Recovering America's Wildlife Act* will provide significantly more resources for states to recover threatened and endangered vertebrates and invertebrates, other federal funding could be freed up to focus on recovery of threatened and endangered plants. Also, many of the habitats these plants rely on will be the focus of conservation and restoration efforts funded under the Act, benefitting both plant and animal species.

Question: How can state fish and wildlife agencies that lack legal authority over plants facilitate plant conservation?

Answer: State fish and wildlife agencies lacking specific legal jurisdiction over plants can advance native plant conservation through land protection, habitat management, collaboration with other organizations, and private landowners. State fish and wildlife agencies can direct land acquisition and habitat management programs to benefit priority species and plant communities. They can also engage other land management partners, agencies with specific plant authorities, private landowners, and nongovernmental organizations to address conservation needs for native plants.

For questions or more information on the topics listed below, please contact these staff at the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies:

SGCN/SWAPs

Mark Humpert

Director of Conservation Initiatives

mhumpert@fishwildlife.org

O: 202-838-3459

Recovering America's Wildlife Act/Legislation

Jennifer Mock Schaeffer

Government Affairs Director

jenmock@fishwildlife.org

O: 202-838-3468