

STAFF SUMMARY FOR JUNE 10-11, 2015

20. NATIVE PLANT POLICY**Today's Item**Information Action

Adopt FGC policy for native plants (Exhibit 1).

Summary of Previous/Future Actions

- Received and discussed policy Apr 16, 2014, Ventura
- Discussed policy Apr 8-9, 2015; Santa Rosa
- **Today's adoption of policy Jun 10-11, 2015; Mammoth Lakes**

Background

California hosts approximately 6,500 species, subspecies, and varieties of plants that occur naturally in the state, and many of these are found nowhere else in the world. Some are adapted to unique habitats or harsh conditions, and some occur in such low numbers or have been so impacted by human influence that they are at risk of permanent extinction. The state's policies and practices regarding native plants are in need of review and updating.

The legislature adopted a resolution in support of California's native plants (Exhibit 2). This resolution recognizes the vital role native plants have played in California's past and the need to conserve them for our future. In addition, it declared the third week of April, each year, as California Native Plant Week.

Significant Public Comments (NA)**Recommendation**

FGC staff: Adopt policy.

Exhibits

1. *Draft Policy for California Native Plants*
2. Assembly Concurrent Resolution 173

Motion/Direction

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the proposed policy for California Native Plants.

Draft California Policy for Native Plants

The California Fish and Game Commission recognizes the following:

1. The management and conservation of California's native flora are important to the State of California, and native plants, as vital components of the State's natural wildlife communities, are held in trust for the people of the State by and through the Department of Fish and Wildlife. [FGC Sec. 711.2(a), 711.7(a), and Sec. 1600]
2. 'Native plants' are generally defined as plants that occur naturally in California without direct or indirect human actions.
3. The California State Legislature recognized the essential value and importance of California native plants to the State's history, economy, landscape, and environment, as declared in Assembly Concurrent Resolution 173 (2010).
4. The State's policies and practices regarding native plants are in need of review and updating. More than 30 years ago state law focused on transplantation as a means of mitigating for listed plant species, however experience and numerous studies document that such practices are largely ineffectual over time and often damaging to species or population survival.
5. Growing concern for the effects of wild land fires continues to raise questions and uncertainty regarding appropriate course of action on such issues as fuels management, post fire salvage and seeding, among other actions that may have significance for native plant conservation.
6. It is incumbent upon the Commission and the Department to address the differing public agency opinions and ideas regarding native plant conservation objectives, survey and mitigation standards, genetic degradation, habitat protection, and other native plant issues. Better coordination between state agencies is necessary to overcome institutional and budget constraints.

Therefore, it is the policy and practice of the Fish and Game Commission that:

- The Commission shall encourage, support, and implement, on its own initiative and with the Department of Fish and Wildlife, strategies and tools to conserve native plants as integral elements of the State's wildlife. The Commission shall consider, as appropriate, native plant conservation when carrying out duties which may have a relevant link to plant conservation.
- Incorporating and using current scientific techniques, tools, and standards in the conservation of native plants is necessary to protect the integrity of natural communities and wildlife resources, make land use decisions, and meet the needs of human communities.
- Conservation planning and management for native plants require proactive approaches that address both naturally occurring and human-induced stressors.
- Data collection and sharing among public and private entities coupled with improved data analysis is critical to successful native plant conservation. This requires adequately trained and experienced human resources being available to the Department and other responsible parties.
- Laws, public policies, and natural resource management practices of public agencies, with regard to native plants, need to be reviewed, modernized, and coordinated to ensure consistent and effective native plant conservation based on current scientific and societal needs and understanding.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution 173

INTRODUCED BY Assembly Member Noreen Evans

(Coauthors: Assembly Members Adams, Ammiano, Arambula, Bass, Beall, Bill Berryhill, Tom Berryhill, Blakeslee, Blumenfield, Bradford, Brownley, Buchanan, Charles Calderon, Carter, Coto, DeLa Torre, De Leon, Eng, Feuer, Fong, Fuentes, Furutani, Hall, Hayashi, Hill, Huffman, Jones, Lieu, Bonnie Lowenthal, Ma, Mendoza, Monning, Nava, John A. Perez, V. Manuel Perez, Ruskin, Salas, Saldana, Skinner, Solorio, Audra Strickland, Swanson, Torlakson, Torres, Torrico, Tran, Villines, and Yamada)

Relative to Native Plant Week

WHEREAS, California's native plants provide unparalleled and unique iconic, economic, artistic, historical, and environmental values to the state; and

WHEREAS, California's over 6,000 native plant species, subspecies, and varieties, of which over 2,150 exist only in California, make California home to more diverse plant life than all other states combined; and

WHEREAS, California's native plants include some of the oldest, tallest, and most massive living things on Earth; and

WHEREAS, The Department of Fish and Game recognizes nearly one-quarter of California's native plants as "special status plants" that warrant additional protections; and

WHEREAS, California currently contends with over 1,000 nonnative plants, some of which compete with native plant species, degrade soil, facilitate erosion and catastrophic wildfire, and alter the state's natural landscapes; and

WHEREAS, Many native California plants have played a vital role in the history of our state and our nation, compelling Congress, the Legislature, and many communities to protect the beauty, power, and grandeur of our wild places; and

WHEREAS, California's first Indian nations lived and thrived by their knowledge of native California plants, which provided them with food, clothing, shelter, dyes, tools, medicines, and fuel for centuries; and

WHEREAS, California's citizens have consistently supported efforts to protect our wild landscapes, including numerous areas within the Coast Redwoods, the Sierra Nevada Mountain range, and the Mojave Desert, spurring a conservation and environmental awareness that helps define California today; and

WHEREAS, California's native plants have played a vital role in inspiring the creation and management of our National Park Service, including President Lincoln's 1864 signing of the Yosemite and Mariposa Big Tree Grove Grant to California, designating a park "to be held for public use, resort, and recreation ... inalienable for all time," and the adoption of the Sequoia cone as an official insignia of the National Park Service; and

WHEREAS, In 1899, 1903, and 1904, members of the 9th Cavalry and 24th Infantry Buffalo Soldier regiments were dispatched to Sequoia and Yosemite national parks, where they protected giant sequoias from illegal logging, built trails and fences to enhance visitors' experiences among the giant trees while protecting park resources, and developed the first museum in a national park, a California native plant arboretum in Yosemite Valley; and

WHEREAS, An interest in protecting California's native plants has played a vital role in the creation of many California state and regional parks, including California's oldest state park, Big Basin, created in 1902 to protect old growth Coast Redwood forests; and

WHEREAS, The impact of California's landscape has influenced literary and artistic works, including the works of Mark Twain, John Steinbeck, Ansel Adams, and many other internationally known figures, furthering California's legacy; and

WHEREAS, California's native plants have provided and continue to provide foods, medicines, and other products, from the origins of California's strawberry industry to Taxol for cancer treatment; and

WHEREAS, California native plant horticulture is a thriving, vital, and growing industry employing thousands of Californians, and the benefits to water conservation and natural area restoration help provide economic stability within the state; and

WHEREAS, California's native plants provide essential watershed protections by helping to recharge natural aquifers, filtering water flowing through mountains, hills, and valleys, lessening erosion and flooding, and enabling efforts to beautify and renew our state; and

WHEREAS, Gardens and landscapes comprised of California native plants, being perfectly suited to California's climate and soil, require far fewer fertilizers, soil amendments, or pesticides, and use 60 to 90 percent less water than conventional landscapes, exemplified by a City of Santa Monica experiment, in which a native plant garden using appropriate watering methods was shown to use nearly 220,000 fewer gallons of water than a similarly sized conventional garden, a 77 percent decrease in water use; and

WHEREAS, Restoring California native plants provides natural links to wild land areas, while introducing people to their beauty and instilling a greater understanding and appreciation for California's natural heritage; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate thereof concurring, That the Legislature recognizes the essential value and importance of California native plants to our history, economy, landscape, and environment; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California Legislature encourages community groups, schools, and citizens to undertake appropriate activities to promote native plant conservation and restoration, and to inform their neighbors and communities of the value of native plants in nature and in horticultural settings; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the California Legislature hereby declares the third week of April, each year, as **California Native Plant Week**; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the author for appropriate distribution.

Adopted by the California Assembly, August 2, 2010

Adopted by the California Senate, August 27, 2010