

California Native Plant Society

CNPS Conservation Planning Meeting: Eaton Canyon, Pasadena, CA
January 29, 2005 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

I. Introduction

- This is the first of 4 visioning meetings to occur over the next 9 months. The meetings will culminate with a special session at the CC meeting in September. Future meetings will be held on:
 - Saturday, March 12 in the Sacramento area
 - Saturday, July 9 in Santa Clara
 - Saturday, July 23 or 30 (tbd) in the North Coast area
 - Saturday & Sunday, September 8-9 at the Chapter Council meeting in Southern California
- At this meeting, we will ask following questions in order to scope out the future of the CNPS Conservation Program: Where are we at now? What are we doing well? What do we need (or need to do) in the future?
- As David Chipping said: 'this meeting is for dream-like stuff, go wild.'

II. Where are we at?

A. 2005 CNPS Board of Directors Priorities

- Board set priorities based on Board set 2005 priorities based on program directors and staff core budget and duties, staff's 'dream list' of possible budget needs and the results from the first two Cross pollination meetings (where board members met with staff and volunteers from all programs to identify areas for collaboration and prioritized these opportunities).
- As their highest priority the Board decided that to hire a paid conservation director and re-hire a development director.
- The timing for the series conservation planning meetings is good because: there has been recent change over in staff, David Chipping is retiring in January 2006, and the program planning meeting timeline fits in well with CNPS fiscal and program planning calendar.
- In 2004, the Rare Plant Program underwent a visioning process and convened four meetings over nine months. Conservation planning will be similar, with four meetings in nine months, ending in September, and feeding into the next year. Sept. Chapter Council will make the final decision on conservation program priorities.
- Ilene Anderson stated that although the board suggests hiring a paid conservation director and she personally supports it, the purpose of this meeting is for the conservation folks to weigh in on what THEY want, and they may have another vision.
- The planning/priorities identified at the end of the conservation planning sessions will be used as we draft the job description for the conservation director (or other position deemed most appropriate).
- At this point a discussion ensued about whether we are trying to balance the issues or agree with Northern California chapters. Pam Muick says these meetings are to prioritize what all the chapters see as needs and address them.

B. David Chipping answers 'where we are at':

- Originally, Emily Roberson was hired to do analysis of forest plans.
- Ileene focuses on federal issues in the south, and thorough operational coverage of local Southern California chapters. With strong volunteer base, Southern California is doing pretty well.
- In general there is too much to do; we are doing a bit of everything and perhaps not doing anything thoroughly or well
- We have been dropping the ball Federal Endangered Species Act.
- We need volunteers to assist in covering Forest Service issues, we used to work heavily in the area because of Emily, no coordination occurring now. Private forest issues are partially covered by volunteers. Volunteers are currently tracking and trying to cover DFG deals with private timber industry and also working on herbicide issues.
- Federal programs in general are not currently being covered except for Ileene's work with the BLM in the deserts and the southern Forests.
- CEQA and NEPA help to chapters not being covered well, especially in Northern California and the Central Valley: Ileene and Carol Witham are helping, but with the large number of projects, some through the cracks.
- We are not building coalitions with other conservation organizations: not active with Sierra club, working with John Hopkins (Institute for Ecological Health), also working with Defenders of Wildlife on ESA issues, but weak in general.
- Weak in coordination of chapters; especially in Northern California: Northern California regional plan coordination is not happening, Shasta, Sierra Nevada's need a coordinated vision. Chipping would like to send in staff to take care of issues in the North.
- Weak in recruitment and retainment of new conservation folks: It is difficult to make conservation sound 'sexy', for example the legislation and wetland committees have evaporated.
- David resigning b/c he has not been able to spend time going around to the chapters, and assisting them as needed.
- Emily moved to the Center for Biological Diversity and is continuing work on the Native Plant Conservation Campaign on Dec 1.

C. What is working well with Conservation? (each person contributed)

- Science- based advocacy: we can provide expert advice to state, federal, and local agencies and non-profits
- Co-operative efforts with environmental groups sometime not effective. If we don't have staff time we can defer the issues to other environmental groups.
- Networking/leveraging of other groups: Need to partner with commonalities, and then argue our position. But we are still an independent organization.
- Regional model has worked well in Southern California.
- We are good at providing information: on websites, through chapters, and publications.
- We tend to attract academics to our organization.
- Opportunity for individual volunteerism is high and important.
- Past litigation gives more powerful leverage on future negotiations.
- Our reputation is good: helpful advocacy.

- We are effective in raising plant issues in regional planning processes, such as Western Riverside.
- Comments on documents helpful to agencies.
- Good reputation gets rapid and positive response from agencies.
- People love what they know and understand, and want to conserve it. We end up making conservationists out of people that never thought they would be conservationists.
- Level of awareness of the beauty of native plants has increased; able to accomplish conservation goals, and receive positive press, etc.
- Organizational framework at state level actually helps chapters—helps credibility and presence.
- Focus/specialty on only native plants is good.
- One individual can make a difference, everything we do can be an educable moment for the public--we think globally act locally.
- Professional staff make CNPS more effective at state level.
- We have cooperation with other conservation groups.
- Stakeholders, single issue people are doing well (we don't need to guilt them into doing more).
- Critical habitat campaign is providing a good outcome for plants with decent designation, and public relations.
- Outreach/education on native plant issues doing well.
- Education to kids, working well, they are becoming conservationists.
- We are setting standards for how botanical resources are assessed.
- Amazing volunteers!
- Strong root system with volunteers, tracking what is going on in their neighborhoods.
- CNPS provides resources to local land management agencies and Non-Governmental Organizations.

III. What do we need to do for the next 3-5 years?

A. Regional Conservation Planning, presented by Carol Witham

- NCCPs/HCPs are blueprints for conservation for the next 50-70 yrs.
- Stakeholder-driven process—tedious and often adversarial.
- Early scientific input often too vague and therefore ignored or misconstrued.
- Projects in NCCP/HCP not subject to additional CEQA review on biological aspects (provided they comply with the “Plan”).
- Current planning in 17 large regions, rumors of others.
- NCCP/HCPs will cover 90% of California in the next 10 years.
- CNPS needs to participate for several reasons:
 - plants
 - good science
 - no subsequent opportunities (such as CEQA review)
 - building the administrative record (for lawsuits on the “plan”)
- Issues:
 - problem of no data (data gaps need to be identified)

- problems of phase II—implementation
- too much work
- Regional plans give us a chance to:
 - be Proactive, rather than re-active
 - respect each other—ranchers, enviros, agencies
- Tools:
 - update NCCP/HCP handbook,
 - analysis of what areas are coming up next, (how well covered are we with conservationists in the area)
 - do's and don'ts of HCP
 - build network w/in CNPS
 - educate other enviro's (about good science-based data collection, etc)
 - CNPS standards for mapping
 - examples x3 (what language to use, what plans are working well)

B. Land Acquisition as a tool

- Land acquisition as a tool seems to be missing in CNPS, open land is going to become a premium.
- The past year, CNPS board approved one land acquisition opportunity.
- Might need to help strengthen land trust strategies and support their acquisitions.
- Work with small local land trusts- partnerships

C. Involving Academia and internships

- Conservation plans for regionally rare species: Claremont Grad program, cooperative program
 - Biological document is not advocacy
 - Can be used as an advocacy tool (CNPS could use the plans to propose conservation strategy and preclude listing)
 - Develop plans for list 1B plants and above, CNPS could suggest plants to be studied (grant-making opportunities as well)
- Provide scientific input and viewpoints: Get internships, students, to look at conservation, rare plant issues, needed for plant science (Eco, Americorps, Student Conservation Association)
- Interns need mentors, structure and rewards
- Wake up Academia, to mentor, provide expertise in conservation/rare plants issues
- Botany is not being done in academia anymore; need to encourage botany in academia.

D. Strengthening CNPS's Conservation message

- Geographic base brings in more members, youth and volunteers—perhaps chapters need a building or parcel.
- Local interest is with horticulture and wildflowers, rather than rare plants and conservation. Conservation seems to be wrecked by media— too politicized, too much gloom and doom, not enough pure science. We need a paradigm shift in how we present our conservation message: approach it mildly, by teaching local flora, and stating a conservation concern.

- It would be good to attract younger people, recently retired folks. The fact that people are talking with money rather than volunteering is a concern.
- There is conservation support with membership: 87,000 hrs in volunteers for CNPS in 2003, donations increasing, and in membership appeals donations are increasing.
- Conservation advocacy is technical, time consuming, political and unrewarding; requires a special type of person. The others not active in conservation advocacy will support conservation efforts with their check books when asked for money to hire full time staff.
- Outside of CNPS, conservation field is sexy, we need to make it more appealing.
- We need to move from reactive to proactive.
- We need to leverage other groups to help fulfill our mission.
- Need to work on early advocacy, make friends!
- Appeal to quality of life issues—need to work on building constituents in urban fringe areas.
- Conservation begins in “my backyard” with good friends and family.
- Horticulture is much more popular than conservation. Those who continue along the path to vegetation ecology and rare plants, will end up in conservation.
- In Mojave Chapter, conservation is done by Ilene, the chapter has not written anything. We need to find ways to collaborate on conservation (with Bristlecone chapter for instance).
- Need to network with others confidentially as appropriate.
- Drop conservation and build up the education program.
- Plan a conservation planning retreat to include everyone, stipend for attendance.
- Training and recruitment of new volunteers needed.
- Increase coordination with out of state plant societies, such as Nevada’s Native Plant Society.
- Need to have a strong scientific base for our advocacy arguments; we need the tools to defend ourselves.
- Need to increase education to other environmentalists and agencies.
- Have fun!

E. Paid Conservation Director and additional staff

- Conservation Director should be a full-time with at staff of 12! We need staff to help prioritize.
- New Conservation Director position needs to be engaged at all levels: Federal, state, regional, local.
- Texas ranger position to inspire folks north of the Bay with walks and education programs.
- Research coordinator, would be a good position.
- Staff needed in Orange Co and San Diego Co. Part-time staff into full time staff. East Bay model, funding.
- Staff need for inventory of rare plants in Mojave Chapter.
- Staff who share state and local responsibilities: rules need to be clarified.
- Additional staff support at state level: need access to an attorney.
- Need regional liaisons for chapters.
- Collaborative vision for chapter staff responsibilities:

- Inventory of rare plants
- Participate in most important local committees for preparing land use, HCP implementation phase.
- Essentially someone who knows what to look out for and when to take action
- Attends meetings,
- Coordinates with local experts
- Compiles volunteer comments
- Coordinates volunteers in every way
- Time keeper: knows when all the projects are going on.
- David Chipping declared a reality check at this point:
 - Not enough money to do the above
 - Still need to do triage
 - Can't cover everything (Ileene doesn't have time to look at plans under 5000 houses)

F. Name Change

- Society needs to change its name—people don't know what native plants are, to make the mission accessible to larger population; we need a 'sexy' name, like CalFlora.
- David Chipping agrees with conservation/education and name change. There is no organization but TNC that takes on habitat conservation. Suggests calling ourselves The California Habitat Association (watershed, plants, animals, etc). We can defend everyone/everything that is covered in habitat.

G. State Needs

- Need CNPS lobbyists to support increased fees for ORV infractions.
- Need to get rid of Native Plant Protection Act.
- Create water credit for developers using native plants in landscaping.
- Old NCCPs into compliance with new NCCPs (SB107)..
- Strengthen protection to locally rare plants.
- Regional conservation groups are the statewide model.
- Must defend ESA, send in stories on how ESA has defended conservation.
- Need to deal with collapse of FWS, DFG.

H. Cross Pollination Issues

- Conservation volunteers would like a clearing house of information: Database of literature.
- Increased linkages with other native plant societies.
- Need to work on issue of scientific collecting permits.
- How to fight pseudoscience?
- Need new standards for digital photography documentation.

I. Information needed

- Grazing information needed.
- Publications need to increase, to educate people, small affordable books.
- We need to define what we mean by conservation and how it drives our efforts.
- Conservation can't exist with out plant science and visa versa: science, education, and advocacy work hand in hand.
- Litigation? Is that an important goal? It tends to lend credibility.

IV. Prioritization of conservation ideas:

- How should Resources (state budget) be spread?
 - Regional (more than one chapter)
 - state
 - local
 - federal
- Participants discussion the difficulty in defining what these mean
- 50% of meeting participants voted for an increase in regional conservation support
- Current allocation (past couple of years):
 - Fed 25%
 - State 50%
 - Regional 25%

V. Next Steps:

- Meeting planned:
 - March 12—Sacramento
 - July 9—Santa Clara Valley
 - July 23-30 San Hedron/Mendocino
 - Sept 9-10 So Cal CC meeting
 - Conservation meetings will end with the Ch. Council meeting in Southern California, where CC will provide guidance on conservation program priorities and direction.

VI. **Attendees:** (name and chapter affiliation)

Name	Chapter
Betsey Landis	LA/Santa Monica Mtns.
Carol Witham	Sac Valley
Celia Kutcher	Orange County
Cindy Burrascano	San Diego
David Bramlet	Orange County
David Charlton	Mojave
David Chipping	SLO
David Magney	Channel Islands
David Sundstrom	South Coast
Halli Mason	LA/Santa Monica Mtns.
Ileene Anderson	Staff
Janet Nickerman	San Gabriel Mtns.
Jessica Olson	East Bay
Jim Andre	Mojave
Jim Hartman	LA County
Jo Kitz	LA/Santa Monica Mtns.
Lyn McAfee	San Gabriel Mtns.
Nancy Burlin	Channel Islands
Pam Muick	Staff
Snowdy Dodson	LA/Santa Monica Mtns.
Spence McIntyre	Orange County
Steve Hartman	LA/Santa Monica Mtns.
Steve Hoskinson	Mojave
Tasha LaDoux	Mojave& Riverside/San Bernardino