

Idaho Native Plant Society Conservation Policy (Approved 2/9/04)

Section 1—Conservation advocacy

In agreement with the mission of INPS, conservation advocacy is undertaken to ensure that laws, regulations, ordinances, policies, best management practices, land management practices, etc. affecting native plants and their habitats are followed or formulated in such a way that promotes their conservation. INPS will work with private citizens and their elected representatives, appointed officials, employees of federal, state, local agencies, and others to improve land management policies and environmental practices affecting native plants and their habitats. Appropriate actions relating to conservation advocacy are diverse. They include but are not limited to the following: public education; site monitoring and observing; commenting; interpreting data and reports; promoting or opposing a proposed action; litigating; and testifying.

Section 2—Speaking on behalf of the Idaho Native Plant Society

According to the Bylaws of the Idaho Native Plant Society (INPS), no member may speak for or in the name of the Society without express authorization of the INPS Board of Directors (INPS Bylaws Article II, Section 1 and Article XI, Section 10). Therefore, any member who wishes to express his/her opinions on conservation issues beyond the scope of INPS Bylaws or in addition to or in support of INPS' official comments must clearly do so on their own behalf, free from representing the Society.

The INPS Conservation Committee and chapter conservation committees may advocate for the conservation of native plants and their habitats if the spirit of the INPS Bylaws is met, if INPS procedures are followed, and if the comment/letter is science-based, professional, and positive in tone.

Section 3-- Procedures for comments/letters on conservation issues

For statewide issues of conservation concern:

The INPS may develop policies and procedures for identifying and acting on statewide issues of conservation concern consistent with this Conservation Policy and INPS bylaws. The INPS Board and/or Conservation Committee may review state conservation policies and procedures from time to time.

The INPS Conservation Committee will identify, discuss, and prioritize issues of statewide concern. The Committee may solicit input from the INPS Board, Chapter officers, general membership, Idaho Rare Plant Conference attendees, and/or other organizations or individuals. The Conservation Committee will then research and write the comments/letter in a manner consistent with the INPS Bylaws, INPS Conservation Policy, and in a professional and positive tone. After the Conservation Committee approves the comments/letter, an electronic copy will be circulated to the INPS State Board of Directors for approval. After receiving the Board's approval, a final draft of the comment/letter will be prepared by the Committee and forwarded to the President for her/his signature and mailing to the appropriate entity. Because INPS bylaws and mission have been followed, the Board's approval shall mandate the President's signature of approved comment/letters.

For regional issues of conservation concern:

INPS chapters may collaborate to discuss and prioritize issues that are regional in nature. A team with representatives from each involved chapter shall be selected to

research and write the comment/letter in a manner consistent with the INPS Bylaws, INPS Conservation Policy, and in a professional and positive tone. An electronic copy of the comment/letter will be circulated to the State Conservation Committee for review. The INPS Board and/or State Conservation Committee may elect to review, in a timely manner, multi-chapter, collaborative comments/letters on regional issues in advance of release.

For local issues of conservation concern:

Each INPS chapter may develop policies and procedures for identifying and acting on local issues of conservation concern consistent with INPS State and chapter bylaws and INPS Conservation Policy. The INPS Board, State Conservation Committee, and/or the appropriate chapter conservation committee may review chapter policies and procedures when deemed necessary. If a chapter president or chapter board questions the suitability of a proposed statement or issue, the issue will be immediately referred to the State President and State Conservation Committee for timely review. The INPS Board and/or State Conservation Committee may elect to review, in a timely manner, Chapter comments/letters in advance of release.

Section 4—Appropriate scientific information sources

In addition to the wealth of knowledge and information held by experienced amateur and professional botanists and plant ecologists represented in the membership of INPS, it is recommended that relevant information sources and best-available data be used for informing our positions and statements. These include, but are not limited to:

- Published floras and ecological community classifications
- Peer reviewed literature, including scientific journals, books, theses, and other technical documents
- Federal, state, county, or other governmental technical publications
- Federal, state, county, or other governmental planning documents, including field data forms, data analyses, biological assessments, impact statements, species lists, etc.
- Idaho Conservation Data Center databases
- Other recognized botanical sources, specialists, and organizations

Other natural resource experts may better address some environmental issues very indirectly affecting native plants and their habitats. However, this does not prevent the INPS Board, State Conservation Committee, or chapter conservation committees from considering indirect or cumulative effects on Idaho's native plants and habitats. For example, acid rain and smog are air quality issues with known direct and indirect impacts on native plants.

Section 5—Limits to conservation advocacy

As a non-profit, tax-exempt organization organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, Idaho Native Plant Society must conform to laws and regulations limiting certain involvement in political and legislative activities. Because of this:

- INPS and its chapters may neither endorse or oppose partisan or non-partisan candidates in any federal, state, or local elections, nor make financial contributions to candidate/s at any time

No substantial part of INPS activities (as defined by the IRS) may consist of lobbying or other attempts to influence legislation (including initiatives and referenda), including writing letters and gathering signatures (endorsing or opposing an action or appointment), etc.

Several important exceptions to limits on political involvement by non-profit, tax-exempt organizations exist. For example:

Testimony by INPS officers, or members representing INPS, before legislative committees regarding specific bills can be considered an educational activity if it meets our mission.

Rules, regulations, policies, and management decisions formulated and enforced by governmental regulatory bodies are not legislative activities; thus, we are not limited in providing testimony to regulatory bodies, nor are we limited in our attempts to influence decisions.

Appointments to regulatory bodies (i.e., appointed positions) are not political in the strict sense; therefore, INPS may oppose or support candidates for appointments to boards, commissions, or the like.

Section 6—Litigation

INPS may use litigation as a legitimate and sometimes necessary means for meeting conservation needs only if the action is directly related to INPS bylaws.

Litigation includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Filing lawsuits

- Filing intent to sue

- Filing amicus curiae briefs

- Acting as an intervener in other organization's lawsuits

- Appealing legal decisions

The INPS Board must approve all litigation activities due to their serious nature (e.g., financial fees, social-political implications). Additional policies or procedures may be developed as needed by the INPS Board before litigation is undertaken.