

California Native Plant Society

STATEMENT OF POLICY - NONVASCULAR PLANTS

Adopted March 1992

Concerns Relating to Conservation of Nonvascular Plants

The California Native Plant Society is concerned that nonvascular plants (cryptograms) such as lichens, algae, fungi, mosses, and liverworts are not usually considered as a biological resource by resource agencies or other lead agencies in California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) or General Plan Law documents.

By their ubiquity, abundance, and diversity, nonvascular plants are an important component of the California flora. Many occupy habitats inhospitable to vascular plants and may be the only plant organisms that occupy certain sites.

These plants, macro- and microscopic, are critical and essential within the integrated ecosystems. They provide habitat, forage, and refuge for terrestrial and aquatic vertebrates and invertebrates. They modify soil or rock substrate which may allow other plants to attach and grow, thereby increasing the potential diversity of habitat. They reduce organic material and enhance uptake of nutrients by other plants, perhaps serving as symbionts, and fix nitrogen that becomes available to other organisms.

Nonvascular plants have been reduced in number, diversity, abundance, and range (as many species in natural areas) by the reduction in habitat area. Aquatic (freshwater and marine) and terrestrial (desert, forest, grassland, scrub, chaparral, and woodland) systems have all been affected to some extent by human activity and all contain nonvascular plants. Some groups of nonvascular plants can be used to indicate the environmental health of an area. Population changes of some species may be valuable for measuring the effects of human activities on the environment. For example, the loss of lichens may indicate increased air pollutants. The loss of mosses may suggest a decrease in soil moisture. A change in the relative abundance of algae may indicate chemical or temperature changes of water.

With these thoughts in mind, the CNPS makes the following policy statement concerning nonvascular plants.

WHEREAS nonvascular plants are valid taxonomic entities and are an important component of the flora of California; and

WHEREAS nonvascular plants provide valuable biological functions, such as: providing habitat for invertebrates, providing forage for terrestrial wildlife and birds, and reducing soil or rock substrates to sand or silt sized particles to create soils; and

WHEREAS nonvascular plants of all types have been reduced from historic extent and are being lost or adversely impacted at a rapid rate throughout California; and

WHEREAS rare nonvascular plants have not been provided legal protection by listing as threatened or endangered under the federal or state Endangered Species Acts; and

WHEREAS nonvascular plants can be important indicators of the health of the environment; and

WHEREAS nonvascular plants add to the biodiversity of the natural environment

The California Native Plant Society:

HEREBY supports all efforts to preserve and conserve native nonvascular plants of all types; and





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HEREBY opposes projects that adversely affect the continued viability of native nonvascular plants of any type unless appropriate mitigation is provided to compensate, in-kind, for losses of native nonvascular plants prior to project impacts; and

HEREBY recommends avoidance of impacts to native nonvascular plants; and

HEREBY urges full enforcement of all laws and regulations concerning nonvascular plants that are consistent with CNPS policies and purposes; and

HEREBY supports and recommends listing of rare nonvascular plants as threatened or endangered under the federal and state Endangered Species Acts as appropriate; and HEREBY supports and recommends state and local government adoption of policies and ordinances to protect and conserve all types of native nonvascular plants and communities; and

HEREBY recommends that all CEQA and General Plan Law documents address impacts to native nonvascular plants and communities for projects that may adversely affect them.

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