

Senator Hirono's Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration, and Promotion Act

Increasing botanical science capacity within the federal government and promoting the preferential use of native plants in land management activities

Problem:

Botanical knowledge plays a key role in finding solutions to fundamental and pressing local and national issues such as food security, ecosystem preservation, biofuel production, habitat restoration, protection of endangered species, and control of invasive species. In the United States, botanical experts help to study, effectively manage, and guide the sustainable use of the nation's vast plant resources. However, the country is projected to lose nearly half of its botanical expertise in the next decade as experienced scientists retire and are not replaced, leading to a myriad of direct and indirect costs both in dollars and in the loss of critical cultural native landscapes. Both the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), which employs just over 1 botanist per 4 million acres, and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) have already reported a deficiency in botanical capacity. At the same time, advanced degrees in botany have decreased by 41% in the last decade.

Bill Summary:

The Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration, and Promotion Act aims to increase the botanical science capacity of the federal government. It allows federal agencies to act with the expertise required to preserve unique American landscapes and emphasizes the importance of protecting native plants and plant ecosystems. More specifically, the bill does three things:

- (1) Authorizes a program of botanical sciences research within the Department of the Interior (DOI) to help increase federal botanic expertise; Allows DOI to hire new, additional personnel; and Creates a student loan repayment program for botanical science personnel modeled after existing programs, including one that provides a similar program for health professionals who agree to work in medically under-served areas.
- (2) Declares a federal policy that the Departments of Interior, Agriculture, and Defense preference the use of locally-adapted native plant materials in their land management activities; Develops recommendations on the use of native plant materials in land management and building activities for the Departments of Defense and Transportation, and the Public Buildings Service.
- (3) Authorizes two relevant areas of work including interagency programs related to seeds, pollinators, and land management and the BLM's plant conservation activities; Instructs the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to incorporate native plant conservation activities into existing programs and to provide a report thereafter to Congress on its implementation; and Establishes a new grant program to support collaborative grants to prevent rare plant species from becoming endangered and to remediate endangered populations.

88 Outside Groups in Support:

Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance
Alabama Wildflower Society
American Herbal Products Association
American Public Gardens Association
American Society of Naturalist
American Society of Plant Taxonomists
Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum
Association for Zoological Horticulture
The Atlanta Botanical Garden
BFI Native Seeds
BG-Base
Botanic Gardens Conservation International (US)
Botanical Club of Wisconsin
Botanical Research Institute of Texas
Botanical Society of America
Brooklyn Botanic Garden
California Invasive Plant Council
California Native Grasslands Association (CNGA)
California Native Plant Society
Center for Plant Conservation
Chicago Botanic Garden
The Cobb Land Trust, Inc.
Colorado Native Plant Society
Connecticut Botanical Society
The Conservation Foundation
Delaware Nature Society
Denver Botanic Garden
Desert Botanical Garden
Environmental Protection Information Center (EPIC)
Fernwood Botanical Garden
Flagstaff Chapter of the Arizona Native Plant Society
Florida Association of Native Nurseries (FANN)
Florida Native Plant Society
Florida Wildflower Foundation
Friends of Edgewood Natural Preserve
Garden Club of America
Georgia Botanical Society
Georgia Native Plant Society
Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance
Greater Hells Canyon Council
Houston Zoo
Illinois Native Plant Society
Institute for Applied Ecology
The Institute for Regional Conservation
Iowa Native Plant Society
Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens
Key West Tropical Forest & Botanical Garden
Kinnikinnick Native Plant Society
Klamath Forest Alliance

Living Habitats
Longwood Gardens
Missouri Botanical Garden
Missouri Native Plant Society
The Morton Arboretum
National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils
National Tropical Botanical Garden
The National Audubon Society
National Wildlife Federation
Native Plant Conservation Campaign
Native Plant Society of New Mexico
Natural Areas Association
NatureServe
Nevada Native Plant Society
New England Wild Flower Society
New York Botanical Garden
New York Flora Association
North Carolina Botanical Garden
Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden
Oklahoma Native Plant Society
Oregon Native Plant Society
Pennsylvania Horticultural Society
Pinelands Preservation Alliance
Prairie Legacy Inc.
Quarryhill Botanical Garden
Rain Shadow Consulting
Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden
Salomon's House
San Francisco Botanical Garden Society
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden
Save the Redwoods League
Society for Ecological Restoration
The Polly Hill Arboretum
Utah Native Plant Society
Virginia Native Plant Society
Washington Native Plant Society
Whidbey Environmental Action Network
Wilbur D. May Arboretum & Botanical Garden
The Xerces Society