

Idaho Native Plant Society Conservation Policy

Section 1-Conservation advocacy

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 formulated or followed in a way that promote their conservation. INPS works 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. The INPS Board, State Conservation Committee, or chapter conservation committees may consider indirect or cumulative effects on Idaho's native plants and habitats.

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 his/her own behalf.

The INPS Conservation Committee and chapter boards or conservation committees may advocate for the conservation of native plants and their habitats if the procedures in this policy are followed.

Section 3-Appropriate scientific information sources

In addition to the knowledge of experienced amateur and professional botanists and plant ecologists represented in the membership of INPS, relevant information sources and best available data should 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

Section 4-Procedures for comments/letters on statewide, regional or local conservation issues

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.

Letters may be generated by individual chapters or by the INPS. All letters should be consistent with the INPS bylaws, INPS Conservation Policy, and written in a professional and

positive tone. INPS Board approval is required for any letters commenting on items NOT on the pre-approved list (see attached) or for any action related to potential administrative appeals or litigation.

Any two INPS members or a chapter board may draft a comment/letter. The letter shall be reviewed first by the INPS Conservation Committee which shall make a recommendation to the INPS Board. The INPS board's approval is required for any further action. In the event that the Conservation Committee is unable to review and/or recommend action, the item may be taken directly to the INPS board. A request to either the conservation committee or to the board will constitute the 10 day notice for a board meeting.

Section 5-Administrative Appeals and/or Litigation

A request to pursue an administrative appeal or litigation shall be reviewed by the INPS Conservation Committee, which shall make recommendation to the board whether or not to support the proposed appeal. If the INPS Conservation Committee is unable to do so, the board shall directly review the anticipated appeal. Notification of the board that an appeal is proposed shall serve as the 10-day special board meeting notice required by the INPS bylaws. The board shall have 14 days from the date of notification to act unless there is a mutually agreed upon extension between the board and the chapter or committee proposing the appeal.

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

Section 6-Limits to conservation advocacy

As a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization organized under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, INPS 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 candidates 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 as stated in the bylaws.
- Rules, regulations, policies, and management decisions formulated and enforced by governmental regulatory bodies are not legislative activities; thus, we may provide testimony to regulatory bodies and attempt 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.

