

H.R. 1054

 the Botany Bill

Talking Points -- Support H.R. 1054(AKA the “Botany Bill”) A Bill to Promote Botanical Research and Botanical Sciences Capacity

Use this information to prepare for your meetings with your Representative and/or their staff

I. Background: Plant Diversity and Locally-Adapted Native Species.

- Plants are sometimes overlooked in conversations about ecological issues. They shouldn't be –
 - They provide critical ecosystem services, including provisioning of food and water, regulation of atmosphere, floods, drought, support for soil formation, pollution filtering and carbon sequestration.
 - Plants and animals that have evolved together depend upon each other for survival – they form a complex network of relationships with each species' life cycle highly dependent on the others.
 - Native plants are the foundation of biodiversity. Native plants are equipped to live with the local climate, soil types, and animals. Locally-adapted native plants do a better job of providing food and shelter for native wild animals than do introduced or invasive plants.
- Native plant communities and the ecosystem services they provide are under stress at a landscape level for a variety of reasons – including the spread of invasive species, altered wildfire regimes, habitat modification and land overuse. These effects are seen on the over 30% of U.S. lands under Federal control. Regionally-adapted native plants are critical to the long terms success of many restoration projects.
- A good case in point is the Sage Grouse. Currently, this western index species is threatened by a number of challenges to its numbers. This has led to a number of mitigation strategies to avoid its listing as an endangered species, which would pose immense problems. One of the keys to protecting the sage grouse is to protect its essential habitat – the sage brush – from destruction due to invasive species and habitat degradation.
- Restoring native plant communities on a landscape scale is challenging. Land managers must often replant large areas quickly to avoid erosion and colonization by invasive species. In some cases, locally adapted native seed may not be available in sufficient quantities. In other cases, the lack of botanical expertise in the government may contribute to the problem. The federal government has been making progress on these issues through a number of initiatives within the Departments of Interior and Agriculture.

II. Federal Government Involvement.

- Numerous federal agencies have involvement in public land and plant conservation issues. These include:
 - Department of Interior
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - U.S. Geological Survey
 - National Park Service
 - Fish & Wildlife Service
 - Department of Agriculture
 - Forest Service
 - Agricultural Research Service
 - National Resources Conservation Service
 - National Institute of Food and Agriculture
 - Department of Transportation
 - Federal Highway Administration
- These organizations and others (such as the EPA) collaborate on land management and native plant issues through and MOU known as the “Plant Conservation Alliance”.

III. What Does H.R. 1054 Do?

- Broadly speaking, the Botanical Sciences and Native Plant Materials Research, Restoration and Promotion Act would advance several goals, including to –
 - Promote critical plant materials and restoration-related research
 - Enhance demand for botanical scientists
 - Drive demand for native plant materials
 - Support rare, endangered and native plants through federal programs
- Each of these issues is explored below –

Problem: We need more botanical sciences research

Solution: H.R. 1045 Authorizes \$10 million/year in funding for the BLM, USGS, FWS and NPS to support intramural and extramural research on –

- Effective approaches to habitat restoration

- Methods for developing and using locally adapted native plant materials
- How to combat invasive, non-native species
- Mitigation Strategies related to medium and long term environment change
- Promoting the recovery of threatened and endangered species

Problem: We need more botanical scientists

Solution: H.R. 1054 Creates opportunities and incentives for individuals with Botanical Sciences Expertise –

- Authorize the BLM to hire twenty additional Botanical Science Personnel (costs about \$3 million)
- Create a program of educational loan forgiveness for Botanical Sciences Personnel
 - Must commit to work for the Department for at least two years
 - Up to \$50,000 in loan forgiveness
 - Modelled after similar successful programs that place health care providers in under-served areas.
 - Costs about \$1 million

Problem: We need to stimulate demand for native plant materials

Solution One: H.R. 1054 Create preference policies for the key agencies

- Applies to Departments of Interior, Agriculture, Defense
- In undertaking land management activities, including maintenance and restoration, preference shall be made for the use of locally-adapted native plant materials
- Non-natives may be warranted in –
 - emergency restoration,
 - interim persistent measures,
 - When not available,
 - permanent alteration of plant community.

Solution Two: Use Federal buying power to drive demand

- Amend the Surface Transportation Act to direct that when states use their federal highway dollars for environmental restoration and pollution

abatement efforts, they use to the extent practicable, native plant materials.

- Amend the Federal Building Code for development or redevelopment of any federal building with a footprint of 5,000 square feet to use strategies that to the maximum extent technically feasible use locally adapted native plant materials on all natural spaces.

Problem: The Native Plant Component of Federal Programs can get “Lost in the Shuffle”

Solution: Underscore the importance through various programs –

- Create an explicit authorization for the PCA Interagency Plant Materials Efforts and Implementation of the Seed Strategy
- Authorize BLM’s Native Plant Materials Development Program
- Amend the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to implement native plant-specific funding
- Amend the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 to authorize grants to the states to protect rare and endangered plants

IV. Request to your Representative (the “ask”):

Please contact Rep Quigley or Rep Ros-Lehtinen to add your name as a cosponsor of H.R. 1054.