

HOW REVISIONS ARE MADE TO THE SPECIAL PLANTS, BRYOPHYTES, AND LICHENS LIST (ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, NAME CHANGES, AND STATUS CHANGES)

Roxanne Bittman, CNDDDB
November 1, 2011

Introduction

The process for making changes to the California Natural Diversity Database's (CNDDDB) *Special Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List (Special Plants List)* is a collaborative operation with input from a wide range of organizations, agencies, and botanical experts. This process parallels the one used by the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) to make changes to the closely related CNPS *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California (Inventory)*. The CNPS and CNDDDB botanists work together to revise their respective lists in order to minimize duplication of effort.

Any revisions made to the CNPS *Inventory* and the CNDDDB *Special Plants List* must go through a rigorous set of steps based on an impartial scientific evaluation of information. Revisions are evaluated by the CNPS Regional Plant Status Review Groups (comprised of more than 330 botanists from throughout California and elsewhere), CNPS Rare Plant Status Review Forum members, and various botanical experts in order to make the best decision regarding plant rarity. The CNDDDB has a similar mechanism for determining rarity of California lichens by having the California Lichen Society (CALs) and relevant experts on lichens review any revisions to lichens and their status. Below is an outline of the process used to revise the CNDDDB *Special Plants List*.

How the Revision Process Works

- Proposed Addition/Status Changes Submitted to CNPS and CNDDDB: Potential additions and changes to the *CNPS Inventory* and the *CNDDDB Special Plants List* are either discovered through literature reviews or are submitted to our office. The CNPS botanist and the CNDDDB botanist then work together to prepare review documents regarding the proposed revision.
- Gathering Information: The CNPS staff conducts research of all pertinent information from relevant publications, available herbarium records, available CNDDDB reports, and information from experts who have direct knowledge of the distribution, taxonomy, and biology of the species.¹ This information is then summarized by the CNPS botanist into a series of documents outlining the plant's rarity status; these are known as the status review documents. Included in these documents is a proposed rare plant ranking determined by both the CNPS and CNDDDB botanists based on available information.
- Initial Status Review: The CNPS botanist and the CNDDDB botanist will then initiate a status review of the plant in order to receive comments on the proposed ranking. During the status

¹ CNPS takes the lead on preparing the materials that go into the status review document. This allows the CNDDDB to concentrate on mapping rare species information and entering it into a database. Both efforts are critical to the process. This division of labor is a critical reason why the California program is so efficient and productive relative to similar programs in other states.

review, the status review documents are sent to the regional review groups and other knowledgeable botanists by email. In addition, the proposed status review is posted on the CNPS Rare Plant Status Review Forum (Forum) where all comments regarding the proposed revision are available for viewing. After 3 weeks, the CNPS botanist will send out a “Final Call” for comments in order to notify all involved groups and experts that any remaining comments on the proposed revision should be submitted. During this time, the CNPS botanist and CNDDDB botanist will also request further clarification, comments, or additional expertise if needed.

- General Consensus Reached: If a general consensus regarding the status proposal has been reached following the Final Call, the comment period will be closed and reviewers are notified of the final decision. The CNPS and CNDDDB botanists then make the change final by posting it to both the CNPS *Inventory* and the CNDDDB *Special Plants List*. If general consensus is not reached, further steps are taken as outlined below.
- General Consensus Not Reached (Phase 1): If a general consensus of reasoning is not reached during the initial review period and no clear evidence for a logical determination is acquired, the CNPS botanist will consult with the Rare Plant Program Committee (RPPC), acquire additional supporting rationale and information, and initiate a second round of Forum review. After 2 weeks, if a general consensus has been reached, the comment period will be closed. The final determination is then posted to the *Inventory* and the *Special Plants List*.
- General Consensus Not Reached (Phase 2): If a general consensus of reasoning is still not reached after a second Forum review period, then the CNPS botanist and CNDDDB botanist have two options. They may convene an in-person meeting that includes all interested parties with relevant botanical expertise, in order to make a collaborative status determination based on available information. Any decision reached will subsequently be posted to both the CNPS *Inventory* and the CNDDDB *Special Plants List*. If convening an in-person meeting is unlikely to facilitate reaching a decision, the CNPS botanist and CNDDDB botanist will postpone any determination until significant additional information has been acquired.
- Final Determination: Once the review process has concluded and final consensus has been reached, the final determination of California Rare Plant Rank and of CNDDDB Global and State ranks is made and published in our publications, the CNPS *Inventory* and the CNDDDB *Special Plants, Bryophytes, and Lichens List*, respectively.
- As new data become available, the status review process can be reopened and the rarity and endangerment status of a plant reviewed as needed.