The Conservation Committee has increased contacts with other conservation groups, reviewed a request from the California Native Plant Society, and developed ideas for longer-term activities.

**Contact with other plant conservation groups.**

The Conservation Committee has continued its contact with other plant conservation groups such as the IUCN, the Plant Conservation Alliance, the Garden Club of America, and the California Native Plant Society. We intend to continue these interactions and to keep lines of communication open. Additional contacts are being made in an effort to publicize the existence of the Committee as a service to the BSA and other interested parties.

**Role of the Botanical Society of America in environmental advocacy.**

The Conservation Committee has been asked to comment on a solicitation of endorsement received from the California Native Plant Society. In this solicitation, the BSA was asked to endorse an “open letter” from the CNPS and other plant conservation groups urging that the Federal Endangered Species Act be emended to give equal protection to plants as given to animals (particularly vertebrates). Several conservation groups (e.g., National Parks and Conservation Association, Sierra Club, etc.) and native plant societies (e.g., Florida, Oregon, Indiana, etc.) have signed this petition but no other professional society has. For lack of consensus on the issue and an unclear picture on the BSA rules for advocacy, we have not directly signed this letter but have decided to develop a plant conservation position statement for the BSA. At the request of BSA President Gensel, we are currently working on guidelines for this position statement and for BSA advocacy in general.

Many other professional societies maintain stated positions on issues of concern such as increased federal funding for scientific research and international treaties such as the Kyoto protocol on Global Warming. The BSA itself has sent letters to the governors of Kansas and Tennessee on the teaching of evolution in schools. However, Article XIV.3 of the BSA bylaws states:

“Whereas The Society exists for scientific and educational purposes, it may engage in efforts intended better to inform the public on issues pertaining to plant science and the influences of plants on people as an element in the biosphere. The Society, nevertheless, shall not allow any part of its activities to become those of lobbying or espousing particular scientific, economic, political, social, or religious doctrines or dogmas.”

Given what seem to be conflicts between the wording of the BSA bylaws and the actual and/or desired level of advocacy, the Conservation Committee is currently evaluating comparable bylaws for other professional societies. A summary of these will be presented to the BSA president as recommendations for BSA positions on similar issues.

**Responding to inquiries.**
Several unsolicited letters were received from interested parties asking for information on plant conservation, wishing to volunteer their time to plant conservation efforts, or specifically asking for funding from the BSA. Responses to these letters were made and the parties were directed to the requested information or contacts.

A solicitation for funds to help publish a brochure on invasive species was received from the Plant Conservation Alliance. Although the deadline for requests for the upcoming budget has passed, this solicitation will be forwarded to the Council for consideration.

**Charges for the future**

President Gensel has asked that each Section and Committee develop ideas for future efforts and directions. Several ideas for the Conservation Committee have been discussed including publication or assistance with publication of materials related to plant conservation, development of BSA Plant Conservation web pages, organization and support of symposia for discussion of plant conservation issues, and more direct coordination with other groups concerned with plant conservation.

Some of these ideas can be addressed directly within the current structure of the Conservation Committee but others can only be accomplished through reorganization as a Section. The BSA by-laws permit Sections (as interest groups) to hold symposia and to promote research and education in their respective areas. Committees, however, serve largely as sources of information and advice to the Council and normally do not hold symposia. Creation of a Plant Conservation Section is not being proposed formally at this time but the idea has been presented and we request input and feedback for future consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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