

# Plant Species of Conservation Concern Identification Process for the Flathead National Forest's Draft Revised Forest Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

[The 2012 Planning Rule](#) (36 CFR 219) defines a species of conservation concern (SCC) as "a species, other than a federally recognized threatened, endangered, proposed or candidate species, that is known to occur in the plan area and for which the regional forester has determined that the best available scientific information indicates substantial concern about the species' capability to persist over the long-term in the plan area" (36 CFR 219.9). The Regional Forester identifies SCC as part of the planning process. Direction for identifying SCC are in the [Forest Service handbook \(FSH\) for land management planning](#) (i.e., the planning directives) at FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.52 and chapter 20, section 21.22a.

This document outlines the Northern Region's approach in identifying plant SCC for the Flathead National Forest's draft Revised Forest Plan and draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) (animals are documented separately). This approach is consistent with the [2012 Planning Rule](#) and agency guidance contained in the planning directives. The best available scientific information, including external expert knowledge and information received from the general public, was considered during the development of this list.

**Step 1. During the assessment phase, the Flathead planning team botanists and other vegetation specialists determined which plant species documented to occur in the planning area met the categories described in items 1A-1H below. This step resulted in the "potential SCC" plant list.**

The Flathead revision planning team obtained, from the Montana Natural Heritage Program (NHP) and Forest Service Natural Resource Manager (NRM) applications, spatial records of all species documented to occur on National Forest System (NFS) lands within the plan area, and that met at least one category in Step 1 A-H below.

The NHP and NRM data sources were used because collectively they are the most comprehensive, reliable, and up-to-date sources for documented species occurrences on NFS lands in Montana. The Montana NHP, which is part of the international NatureServe network, manages statewide occurrence records and other information for species and habitats of conservation interest. Corporate Forest Service data on terrestrial and aquatic species are accessed through NRM applications, and are periodically submitted to Montana NHP's statewide data repository.

The categories of species to include as potential SCC originated from the [proposed planning directives](#) at FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, sec. 12.52, which were in place when the potential SCC list was developed. (Note: the final planning directives did not result in meaningful changes to the categories in Step 1 A-H, as measured by the resulting species lists). The categories were:

- A) NatureServe global (G) or infraspecific taxon (T) ranks of 1 or 2.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Statuses obtained from Montana NHP. See <http://mtnhp.org/SpeciesOfConcern/?AorP=a> for definitions and more information.

<sup>2</sup> Statuses obtained from US Fish and Wildlife Service.

<sup>3</sup> No species meeting this category occurred in the plan area.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r1/plants-animals/?cid=stelprdb5130525>

- B) Delisted (removed) from the Endangered Species Act list within the last five years, or delisted and still monitored by the regulatory agency.<sup>2,3</sup>
- C) State of Montana Threatened or endangered designations<sup>3</sup>
- D) Positive “90-day findings” made by the US Fish and Wildlife Service in response to federal listing petitions<sup>2,3</sup>
- E) Montana Species of Concern.<sup>1</sup> Species in this category generally include all vascular plant taxa with Montana NHP state (S) ranks of S1, S2, S3 or SH. Nonvascular taxa (bryophytes and lichens) which are not as well documented or studied as vascular plant taxa in the state, are listed as SOC using similar criteria as vascular taxa but are more strictly limited to those taxa which are believed to be the rarest or most vulnerable to extirpation based on current information. Some plants that are state Potential Species of Concern were also considered.
- F) Species of conservation concern expressed by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes during tribal consultations or in written comments.<sup>3</sup>
- G) Regional Forester’s sensitive species list for the Flathead NF.<sup>4</sup>
- H) All species for which the best available scientific information indicated a local conservation concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long term in the plan area.

**Step 2: During the planning phase, Regional Office and Flathead botanists identified which of the plant species that emerged from Step 1 met the criteria in items 2A, B, and C below. This step resulted in the plant SCC list for the Flathead National Forest’s draft Revised Forest Plan and draft EIS.**

This step was completed by using the best available scientific information, including expertise from internal and external individuals, and the final planning directives at FSH 1909.12, chapter 10, section 12.52 and chapter 20, section 21.22a. The criteria for identifying SCC were:

- A) The species must be native to, and known to occur in, the plan area. A species is known to occur in the plan area if, at the time of plan development, the best available scientific information indicates that a species is established or is becoming established in the plan area. A species with occurrences in the plan area that were merely accidental or transient, or were well outside the species’ existing range at the time of plan development were not considered to be established.
- B) The best available scientific information must indicate substantial concern about the species’ capability to persist over the long term in the plan area.
  - i. In general, substantial concern was best demonstrated by a decreasing population (abundance or distribution), decreasing habitat, or significant threat to the species in the plan area. Other factors considered during this evaluation included abundance, geographic distribution, reproductive potential, dispersal capabilities, and other demographic and life history characteristics of the species. This approach was based on best available science in conjunction with professional expertise of Regional Office botanists.

- ii. Rarity alone typically was not considered a substantial concern unless accompanied by one of the three general conditions listed in (B)(i) above or having other prominent circumstances leading to concern for long-term persistence.
- C) If there was insufficient scientific information available to conclude that there is a substantial concern about a species' capability to persist in the plan area over the long-term, or if the species was secure in the plan area, that species was not identified as an SCC. Rationale for not identifying species as SCC included:
- i. If the species was secure and its continued long-term persistence in the plan area is not at risk based on knowledge of its abundance, distribution, lack of threats to persistence, trends in habitat, or responses to management.
  - ii. Insufficient scientific information available about the species' status in the plan area. Lack of sufficient scientific information included having limited inventory data resulting from low survey effort, lack of effective detection methods, or, in the case of purported population declines, lack of reasonably consistent monitoring methods among trend monitoring periods.

As a result of the steps above, the following plant SCC were identified for the Flathead National Forest's draft Revised Forest Plan and draft EIS:

<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>
<i>Amerorchis rotundifolia</i>	Roundleaf orchid
<i>Botrychium paradoxum</i>	Peculiar moonwort
<i>Botrychium pedunculosum</i>	Stalked moonwort
<i>Carex chordorrhiza</i>	Creeping sedge
<i>Carex lacustris</i>	Lake-bank Sedge
<i>Collema curtisporum</i>	Jelly lichen
<i>Corydalis sempervirens</i>	Pale corydalis
<i>Cypripedium fasciculatum</i>	Clustered lady's-slipper
<i>Cypripedium passerinum</i>	Sparrow's-egg Lady's-slipper
<i>Drosera linearis</i>	Slenderleaf sundew
<i>Dryopteris cristata</i>	Crested shieldfern
<i>Eleocharis rostellata</i>	Beaked spikerush
<i>Epipactis gigantea</i>	Giant helleborine
<i>Eriophorum gracile</i>	Slender cottongrass
<i>Grimmia brittoniae</i>	Britton's dry rock moss
<i>Grindelia howellii</i>	Howell's gumweed
<i>Idahoa scapigera</i>	Scalegod
<i>Liparis loeselii</i>	Loesel's twayblade
<i>Lycopodium inundatum</i>	Northern bog clubmoss

<b>Scientific Name</b>	<b>Common Name</b>
<i>Meesia triquetra</i>	Meesia moss
<i>Mimulus breviflorus</i>	Short-flowered monkeyflower
<i>Petasites frigidus</i> var. <i>frigidus</i>	Arctic sweet coltsfoot
<i>Scorpidium scorpioides</i>	Scorpidium moss
<i>Sphagnum magellanicum</i>	Magellan's peatmoss
<i>Trichophorum cespitosum</i>	Tufted club-rush