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the good, the bad, and the ugly

challenges in plant conservation in Oregon

| Andrea S Thorpe

ABSTRACT

A number of challenges affect the conservation of rare native species, including habitat availability and quality, the number and genetic diversity of existing populations, and the ease at reintroduction and augmentation of populations. Three threatened or endangered species in Oregon, Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus* Douglas ex Hook. ssp. *kincaidii* (C.P. Sm.) L. Phillips [Fabaceae]), Willamette daisy (*Erigeron decumbens* Nutt. var. *decumbens* [Asteraceae]), and pink sand verbena (*Abronia umbellata* Lam. ssp. *breviflora* (Standl.) Munz [Nyctaginaceae]) provide examples of how, when considering these challenges, conservation prospects for a species can fall on a continuum from good to ugly. Lessons learned from working with these species may provide valuable tools that can be used to guide future conservation efforts.

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KEY WORDS

conservation, reintroduction, Kincaid's lupine, pink sand verbena, Willamette daisy

NOMENCLATURE

Plants: USDA NRCS (2008)

Butterfly: ITIS (2008)

Native plant species are being lost at an alarming rate. In the US, the Center for Plant Conservation (2008) estimates that 20% of native plant species are in decline and more than 200 species are extinct. Despite recognition of the need to conserve remaining biodiversity, a number of challenges face land managers conducting on-the-ground conservation, including: 1) limited funding; 2) lack of species-specific knowledge; 3) quality and quantity of remaining habitat; 4) the number of remaining populations and associated genetic variation; and 5) ease of reintroduction and augmentation of populations. Because the first 2 challenges are relatively consistent, I will not discuss them further. Unfortunately, when considering the latter 3 challenges (Figure 1), rarely are there any “best-case” scenarios. Rather, species seem to fall along a continuum from good to bad to ugly. Here, I use conservation efforts on 3 rare plant species in Oregon: Kincaid's lupine (*Lupinus sulphureus* Douglas ex Hook. ssp. *kincaidii* (C.P. Sm.) L.