

Federal Conservation of Western Cypress in the United States¹

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Abstract

It is important to identify and protect at risk and sensitive tree species before irreparable damage occurs to their genetic base. Western cypress (*Hesperocyparis* spp.) is threatened by habitat loss and fragmentation, competition from nonnative species, and susceptibility to current fire intervals and intensities. In an effort to safeguard the western cypress species through *ex situ* gene conservation, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service collaborated with the Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, California Department of Parks and Recreation, CALFIRE, San Mateo County Parks and Recreation, University of California at Santa Cruz, Rancho Santa Ana Botanical Gardens, and private landowners. The conservation effort over the past 3 years consisted of identifying, mapping, and collecting seed from 28 native cypress populations across California and southern Oregon. The populations included Baker, MacNab, Piute, Pygmy, Santa Cruz, Sargent, and Tecate cypress. Collections yielded seed from 527 individuals (ranging from 3 to 29 individuals per population) and are now stored in the National Center for Genetic Resources preservation facility in Fort Collins, Colorado. The completed work and collaboration efforts provide a strong foundation to further expand conservation for *Hesperocyparis* spp. and other species in the Pacific Southwest.

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