

# California Botanist Certification: Purpose, Status, and Future

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## Purpose and Need

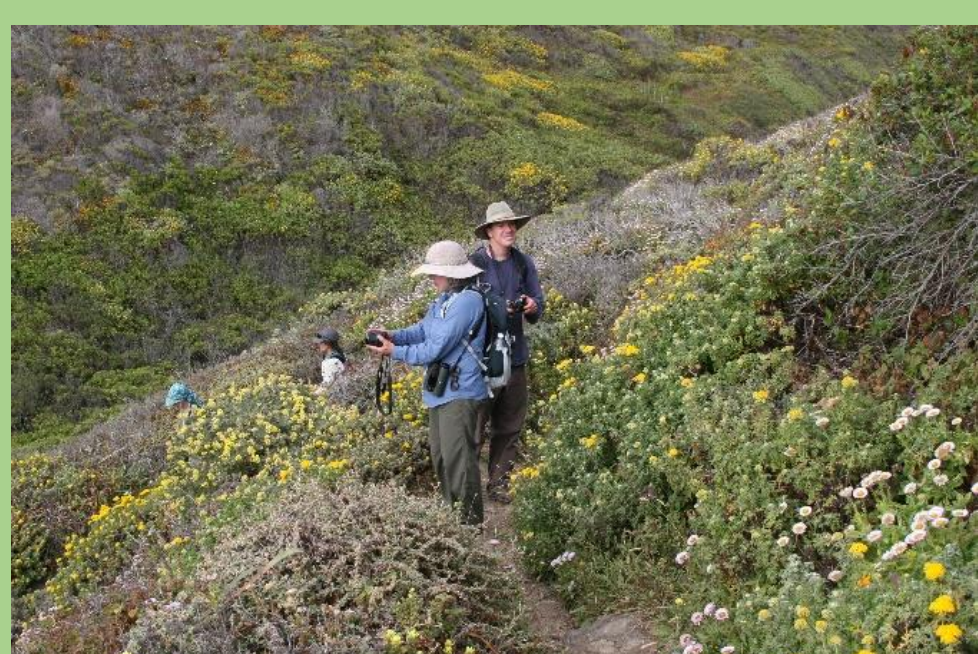
For many years botanists have been actively involved in setting environmental policy and assisting in science-based decision-making in California. Private consulting and public natural resource agencies offer employment opportunities for botanists in field surveys and environmental document preparation, but until now there has not been an entity to offer professional certification to these practitioners.

## California Botanist Certification Established

The California Botanist Certification (CBC) process, based on the collaborative efforts of several botanical institutions, is close to completion. The CBC is run by a Board of Certification (BOC) composed of certified botanists, and administered by the California Native Plant Society.

The goals of the CBC are to:

- Establish widely accepted standards of proficiency and professionalism that guide the training, development, and performance of botanists;
- Facilitate relevant professional training; and
- Maintain and promote courses and training in academic, field-oriented, and reporting arenas.



## Details

Certification is granted through examinations, and is designed for those with 5 or more years of experience. Two levels of certification are offered: Field Botanist and Consulting Botanist. Prior to becoming certified, an applicant will submit a testing fee and take and pass an examinations. One-day examinations will consist of a written portion, a lab portion, and a sight ID portion. After successfully passing the examinations, certified botanists will be required to pay an annual fee and will submit evidence of continuing education every 5 years. They will also agree to abide by a Code of Ethics.

### Field Botanist Examination Objectives:

- plant identification – do you know your plants?;
- field survey methods – how are surveys conducted?;
- site characterization methods;
- laws and regulations pertaining to field work, including those pertaining to vouchering listed plants and collecting permission requirements;
- sampling methods and protocols;
- reporting and record keeping of field work results;
- ethics.

### Consulting Botanist Examination Objectives:

- Field Botanist Examination Objectives, PLUS
- Federal, state, and local laws and regulations pertaining to impact assessment, take of listed species, and rare plants;
- reporting and assessment of findings; and
- development and implementation of mitigation measures.

## Benefits of Certification

- Recognition on the Register of California Certified Botanists;
- Third-party demonstration of botanical knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs);
- Awarded a certificate as a Certified Field Botanist or Consulting Botanist;
- Certification number and relevant acronym for business cards and (email) signatures; and
- Receive the CA Professional Botanist newsletter.



## Future Goals

In the future this effort will provide the larger environmental community with a way of identifying qualified botanists and will serve as an organizing force to direct future botanists toward the profession.

The first certification exams were held in late 2016, and exams in northern and southern California will be held in 2017.

## For More Information

<http://cnps.org/botanistcertification>

Photographs by Mona Robison and Julie Nelson