

2017 National Seed Strategy Task Forces

POLICY & FUNDING

- **Before the Storm – The Need for Seed as a Component of Emergency Preparedness**
This Task Force will build off of Tuesday’s Emergency Preparedness symposium. It will discuss the need for native seed to ensure resilient native plant communities in response to increasing frequency and intensity of extreme weather events resulting from a changing climate. Strategizing ways to incorporate ecological restoration as an adaptation mechanism and insurance policy in response to wildfires, hurricanes, and other extreme weather events will be an objective of this Task Force.
Leads: Peggy Olwell, Bureau of Land Management and Iain Hyde, Colorado Governor’s Preparedness Office
- **Identification of Existing Federal Seed and Restoration Policies and Guidance**
Also known as Action 1.1.3 in the National Seed Strategy, this Task Force will help ensure that all Federal policies related to the development and use of plant materials and restoration are identified. Once identified, compatibilities, gaps, and challenges across Federal agencies can be addressed. Additionally, outputs can be used to inform Action 4.2.3, which is to make existing agency plant material policy available to the public.
Leads: Mark Mousseaux, Bureau of Land Management and William Carronero, U.S. Forest Service
- **USDA Programs and Native Plant Development**
Throughout the United States, USDA programs have traditionally relied on introduced plant material for vegetation projects. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Reserve Program alone are responsible for an estimated 2.0 million acres annually, with a majority of that planted to non-native, introduced, or exotic species. But there are opportunities to create more support for research and development of native plant materials. In the eastern United States, the National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative (NBCI) is leading an effort for the U.S. Department of Agriculture to establish a native vegetation standard which specifies that native vegetation be considered first in all technical or financial assistance and the cost-share assistance be eliminated for all aggressive species. The National Institute for Food and Agriculture makes grants related to plant health and natural resources that could be used to promote the use of native plants. This Task Force will explore opportunities to utilize USDA programs to fund native plant research and development for ecological restoration and rehabilitation.
Leads: Jef Hodges, National Bobwhite Conservation Initiative, Jim Dobrowolski, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, and Dave Walker, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

RESEARCH & TOOLS

- **Coordinating Soil-Related Activities under the National Seed Strategy**

The National Seed Strategy identifies needs for soil-related research and decision tools. These include degradation assessments, amendments and site preparation, soil water assessments, and soil factors related to seed germination and establishment. This Task Force will prompt discussions of how to coordinate and promote these efforts for reporting and sharing under the Strategy. We will identify key organizational contacts, researchers and available research, and establish further communications to advance these parts of the Strategy.

Leads: Greg Eckert, National Park Service, and Dave Lindbo, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- **Seeing is Believing: Demonstration Sites for Native Plants**

Also known as Action 3.1.2 in the National Seed Strategy, this Task Force will plan, implement, and help publicize native plant demonstration sites in different ecoregions across the United States. Demonstration sites will show how to restore habitat with native seed and plant materials.

Leads: Wendy Velman, Bureau of Land Management and Francis Kilkenny, U.S. Forest Service
- **Selecting the Right Seed for the Right Place Right Now**

As National Seed Strategy partners collaborate to improve the availability of genetically appropriate seed materials for restoration, what advice can we provide to land managers RIGHT NOW to help them make the best decisions given what is currently available. This Task Force will work together to develop basic guidance and communication for land managers who may not yet be accustomed to taking native species into account.

Leads: Matt Horning, U.S. Forest Service and Kevin Gunnell, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources
- **Tools for Seed Collectors**

Seed collection is the first step of native plant materials development. It is also conducted by a wide range of individuals across multiple agencies (Federal, state, tribal, and local), nongovernmental organizations, private sector industries, and universities. This Task Force will build off of Monday's Native Seed symposium and focus on successes and challenges faced when designing and implementing effective seed collection.

Leads: Zoe Davidson, Bureau of Land Management, Melanie Gisler, Institute for Applied Ecology, Clara Holmes, Mid-Atlantic Regional Seed Bank and Sean Hoban, Morton Arboretum
- **Training Tools for Practitioners, Producers, and Stakeholders on the Use of Native Seed**

Training programs should be utilized to promote and strengthen professional standards in all activities devoted to the use of native seed and ecological restoration. This Task Force will focus on Action 3.1.1. in the National Seed Strategy and identify gaps between training courses offered and training needed to increase the understanding of restoration principles and the use of native seed across multiple agencies (Federal, state, tribal, and local), nongovernmental organizations, private sector industries, and universities.

Leads: Anne Halford, Bureau of Land Management and Bethanie Walder, Society for Ecological Restoration

COMMUNICATION

- **Communicating the National Seed Strategy**

The aim of the National Seed Strategy is to help land managers select and obtain appropriate plant materials to use in public and private ecological restoration efforts by developing a coordinated, nationwide network of native seed collectors, farmers, growers, nurseries, storage facilities, and restoration ecologists. Communication and information sharing with the public, among strategy partners, and with land managers are integral to these aims. This Task Force will discuss various deliverables of the Strategy and provide recommendations on mechanisms and opportunities for communicating and disseminating information in a coordinated way.

Leads: Lissa Eng, Bureau of Land Management, Evelyn Williams, Chicago Botanic Garden, and Elizabeth Rieben, Rieben Communications

- **Native Plant Advocacy (nonfederal partners only)**

We need an organized effort to advocate for support of native plant programs. There will be strong pressures from this Congress to cut agency budgets. If advocates for native plants don't make their voices heard, programs that promote native plant material development, research, and restoration will likely suffer. Likewise, there is a need for native plant advocates to convince semi-public and private funding sources (NFWF, other foundations) to elevate plants among their funding priorities. Join us to discuss how PCA Non-Federal Members can coalesce around a pro-natives message and deliver it to the appropriate decision-makers.

Leads: Kay Havens, Ginny Hotaling, Andrea Kramer, Chicago Botanic Garden and Rob Bradner, Holland & Knight

- **Native Plants Support Native Wildlife**

Plant species are the foundation of habitat and ecosystems – when we say that wildlife species are declining due to a loss of habitat, this means that the loss of native plant diversity is central to the problem. However, wildlife species tend to be much more charismatic than plants and get much more support and attention. This Task Force will strategize ways to utilize momentum behind wildlife species to support the use and development of native plant materials in habitat management decisions.

Leads: Vicki Herren, Bureau of Land Management and Deborah Finch, U.S. Forest Service

- **Public/Private Partnerships in Native Seed Development**

This Task Force will build off of Wednesday's Seed Industry symposium. Federal, state, and private land managers often work directly with private seed growers to develop genetically appropriate native seeds into commercially available plant materials for restoration projects. This Task Force will bring together public and private sector land managers with private sector seed growers to learn how to improve seed development partnerships that can serve all parties' needs.

Leads: Jerry Benson, BFI Natives, Fred Edwards, Bureau of Land Management, and Claudia West, North Creek Nurseries Inc.