

Southwest Seed



Partnership

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2016 Accomplishments

2016 Geographic Focus (Omernik Level III Ecoregions): Arizona/New Mexico Mountains, Arizona/New Mexico Plateau, Southern Rockies, Chihuahuan Desert, and Madrean Archipelago.

Introduction

In New Mexico and Arizona, native plant materials are needed for rehabilitating millions of acres of land impacted by wildfire, overgrazing, erosion, and mineral and gas extraction. Planting a diversity of native species not only provides resources for pollinators and other wildlife, but also builds critical resistance against invasive species and increases resilience to climate change. Commercial supplies of seed from native species, particularly forbs, are limited. Even more limited are local sources of native plant materials with the genetic diversity needed to adapt to changing environments. In response to the growing need for ecologically-appropriate native seed in New Mexico and Arizona, the Southwest Seed Partnership (SWSP) was established in October 2015.

Current Partners

The SWSP, a collaboration between public agencies, managers, farmers, and conservationists, currently includes the following partners: Institute for Applied Ecology (coordinator), Forest Service SW Region 3 (funder), NM Bureau of Land Management (funder), National Park Service, NM Department of Transportation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Quivira Coalition, NM Land Conservancy, Pueblo of Santa Ana, NM Department of Energy Minerals and Natural Resources, New Mexico Game and Fish, Colorado Plateau Native Plant Program, Verde Watershed Native Plant Materials Program, and Borderlands Restoration.

The National Seed Strategy

The partnership is working to develop native seed by coordinating seed collection, research, monitoring, production, and restoration. The National Seed Strategy establishes a framework for implementing these seed conservation strategies. The following table summarizes SWSP's 2016 accomplishments parallel to the National Seed Strategy objectives.



<p>1. Identify seed needs, ensure the reliability of genetically appropriate seed</p>	<p>1.1 Assess Seed Needs: Initial target lists have been developed for 3 NM and AZ ecoregions and are under review. Multiple public (Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, NM Department of Transportation, Natural Resources Conservation Service, etc.) and private seed users have shared wish lists or provided input to target lists. A restoration “seed needs” survey has been developed and is ready for distribution. A species selection subcommittee will continue to refine these lists.</p> <p>1.2 Assess Grower Capacity: Grower outreach/presentations at multiple venues (i.e., NMSU Northern Pueblos Ag Day, State Seedsman Association, community farm board meetings) with 5 individual farm visits to assess capacity and expertise.</p> <p>More than 10 Southwest producers (2 tribal nurseries, 3 commercial producers, and several small scale farmers) have expressed an interest in participating in the program. A grower survey has been developed and is ready for distribution. Coordination continues with NM and AZ tribes, agency tribal liaisons, and watershed councils to further facilitate native species production at tribal farms.</p> <p>1.3 Increase supply of seed: Collection: Seed collection crews covered 6 ecoregions in 2016 (AZ NM Mountains, AZ NM Plateau, S. Rocky Mountains, Chihuahuan Desert, SW Tablelands, and Colorado Plateau). The 2016 seed collections were represented by 21 families, 54 genera, and 79 unique species, and collections were made from 233 populations. Half of the total collections were from forb species. Seed is being cleaned and placed in cold storage until ample diversity is available to deliver to seed producers. This was the second year of seed collections (initial collections were made in the Madrean Archipelago in 2015).</p> <p>Production: Funding secured for 4-8 production fields in NM and AZ. First production fields will be contracted in 2017. A harvest is anticipated in 2018-19 (annual species).</p>
<p>2. ID research needs & conduct research</p>	<p>Future program goal.</p>
<p>3. Develop tools that enable managers to make timely, informed seeding decisions for restoration</p>	<p>3.1 Training Programs: Audiences have been reached through numerous native seed presentations and workshops, including a native seed collection workshop (Rio Mora NFW Refuge, NM) and a milkweed/grower outreach workshop (Los Lunas Plant Materials Center, NM).</p> <p>3.2 Develop seed source availability tools: As native plant materials in NM and AZ become increasingly available, this information will be updated to the interactive Native Seed Network website at www.nativeseednetwork.org. Training on use of the website will be provided. IAE has also developed a Southwest restoration seed buyer informational brochure.</p>

4. Develop strategies for internal and external communication

4.1 Internal communications:

A SWSP Steering Committee, comprised of 12 representatives and resource experts from public and private organizations, met in April 2016 and identified:

- 1) Areas of overlap and gaps for native seed development
- 2) Opportunities for collaboration or leadership
- 3) A process for prioritizing target species, determining seed transfer zones, and helping seed users project seed needs
- 4) Initial funding strategies and recommendations for structuring a seed partnership for the southwest.

SWSP presentations were provided to the Forest Service Region 3 Biologist Annual Meeting, Forest Service Supervisors Meeting, and NM BLM state office resource managers. Coordination meetings with BLM NM field offices (Rio Puerco, Socorro, and Taos) and Region 3 Forests (Tonto, Coronado, Kaibab, Santa Fe, Coconino, Cibola, and Carson) also occurred in 2016.

4.2 External communications:

Native seed topics and SWSP information was presented to the Native Plant Society (3 chapters), Albuquerque Wildlife Federation, NM Game & Fish, Quivira Coalition, Society for Ecological Restoration, and the Colorado Plateau Native Plant Program conferences. Meetings to engage a broad group of native seed stakeholders, both users and producers, in NM and AZ have been scheduled for 2017.

