

Nevada Native Seed Forum – Meeting Summary

Plant Industry Division – March 28, 2017



The Forum commenced at 9:00 am on March 28, 2017. Meghan Brown, Plant Industry Deputy Administrator welcomed attendees and allowed for the introduction of all participants. Several industries were represented, scaling from non-profits, educators, private farmers and ranchers, and government officials.

After circling the room and determining the diversity of participants a panel discussion was formed, consisting of primarily government officials. Members of the panel included Sarah Kulpa (USFWS), Fred Edwards, (BLM), Dirk Netz (USFS), Lee Turner (NDOW), Michael Taylor (UNCE), Eric Roussel (NDF), Russell Wilhelm (NDA), and Christopher Bernau (NRCS). The intent of this panel discussion was to provide an overview of federal involvement with the native seed industry. The National Seed Strategy was the primary topic, showcasing the federal government’s vested interest in assisting with the advancement regarding all aspects of native seed. The intent of the National Seed strategy is to implement a consistent theme of “the right seed in the right place at the right time.” Majorly, this involves a vast amount of research supporting the ability to generate consistent techniques for native re-seeding success. Sarah Kulpa provided an overview of the Seed Strategies content. Fred Edwards followed with a presentation of Great Basin partnerships within the cycle of seed collection, development, production, and use. This clarified aspects of the industry and highlighted areas of the industry where specific industries play an important role (an infographic illustrating the important details of this cycle will be provided at request).

Questions were taken following the panel discussion many of which circulated around the following topics:

- Producer involvement: what, where, when, why
- Determination of practical species
- Coordination of federal/state/county agencies and how producers can benefit
- Achieving quality seed leading to successful revegetation
- Native seed implementation: Fire, roadside, erosion control, etc.

The panel discussion was followed by a presentation made by Michael Taylor and Dick Bartholet of UNR. The two researchers from UNCE discussed the volatile economic market facing the native seed industry and provided means on how to incorporate more stability into the market. Major issues impacting the market revolve around lack of research, inconsistent supply/demand, and uncertainty regarding species selection. It was illustrated that there is a correlation between success rate and acres treated. As more acres are treated, the success rate is negatively impacted. The appropriate way to counteract this trend is to incorporate a higher budget. In instances where this is not possible, a greater level of research can supplement a higher budget. This goes back to the principle theme of the National Seed Strategy; “the right seed at the right place at the right time.” Dick Bartholet identified the issues related to market risk v. production risk; two major inhibiting factors currently facing the industry. There is low market and production risk when forward contracting is a possibility, a strategy typically taken by federal stakeholders. There is high market and production risk when the wildland collection only seed source approach is taken (seed is gathered off of landscape with no contracting promised). A graphic illustrating these factors will be provided below.

Lunch was held at 11:45 am – 12:45 pm

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Ed Kleiner of Comstock Seed presented information regarding his experiences within the industry. Kleiner stressed the volatility of the market and inconsistencies with supply/demand. He highlighted that there are several market approaches one can take to counteract the volatility. It is important to recognize the diverse components of native seed and to identify a wide array potential buyers and to not pigeon hole one's self into a single facet of the industry. Researching and following trends will greatly assist in the success of a native seed collection/production business. Identifying weather patterns tracking areas where a greater collection can occur during a season is an additional path to success. Ed also identified detriments within the industry relating to seed lab inconsistencies when generating reports, collection struggles, and farming challenges. It is important to maintain seed channel networks and to consistently communicate/coordinate with stakeholders to create a path to success.

Russell Wilhelm of the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDA) presented material on the ability to certify collected and produced native seed. The NDA is the official seed certifying agency for the state of Nevada and has the ability to provide quality assurance measures for collected/produced native seed. Seed certifying protocol was presented and various factors of the NDA's ability to assist the industry. The NDA maintains a source identification service as well as certification programs that will provide the producer/collector to have the seed species inspected to determine quality, heightening the value of the seed product. Lab services can be provided for all aspects of the seed industry involving: purity, germination, tetrazolium, and noxious weed analysis.

The Forum was finalized with a second discussion relating to topics discussed throughout the meeting. This second panel consisted of the same individuals from the first panel, with the addition of Ed Kleiner from Comstock Seed. Meghan Brown addressed the room and asked the questions: what did you learn? What questions do you have? and Where should we go from here? Participants were receptive and the general theme was there is a much room for growth throughout the industry. Native seed is in demand and it's a matter of conducting research and stimulating collection/cultivation in order to see the industry prosper. The audience would like to see a re-occurrence of this forum and would like to maintain open communications in order to see the industry thrive. It is possible to conduct a biennial meeting structure in order to further strategical development of this industry in Nevada.

In order to continue discussion and progression within the native seed industry, it was determined that follow-up in the following areas must be made:

Producer educational material:

- Best practices for native seed production
- Seed menu - i.e. what the federal and state agencies are looking to purchase
- List of buyers
- Seed transfer guidance
- Seed Need Database
- Seed Producer Data base
- Seed/plant fact sheets – i.e. what is the shelf life of different seeds, and Nevada Native Seed Association
- Presentations to agriculture related trade associations

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-Educational materials for producers via conservation districts, extension, producers groups, tribes:

- How to get started in native plant production
- Essential contacts at the state and federal agencies
- Links to forms needs to start selling to federal agencies

Topics for upcoming forums:

- Seed mixes
- Monitoring
- Storage
- Where has successful restoration/rehabilitation occurred?
- Presentation on economics: supply/demand

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>----- MARKET RISK ----->	Prices: set by the market, with fire season as the primary demand determinant. No inventory accumulation.	HIGH	Status quo - spot market	Wildland collection, agronomic research needed	Wildland collection only seed source
	Prices: set by the market, with fire season as the primary demand determinant, but with projected future needs for non-fire restoration plus some annual inventory accumulation.	MEDIUM	Annual inventory purchases plus non-fire demand projections	Forward contracting, annual inventory purchases plus non-fire demand projections	Wildland collection, agronomic research needed
	Prices: Forward contracting with guaranteed price for some predetermined quantity.	LOW	Forward contracting	Cost plus fixed fee contracts	Cost plus fixed fee contracts
			LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
			Species and seed source: existing native cultivars with known agronomic processes, inputs and outcomes.	Species and seed source: new local seed source, some unknowns about agronomic processes, inputs and outcomes.	Species and seed source: commercial cultivation has not yet been shown to be viable, or growing conditions are to be "restricted."
			>----- PRODUCTION RISK ----->		

Source: Michael Talyor & Dick Bartholet (University of Nevada, Cooperative Extension)