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United States Department of Agriculture

Home (../..) » Wildflowers (../) » Native Plant Materials (./) » Forest Service Native Plant Materials Policy and Authorities

Native Plant Materials Policy and Authorities

Native plant communities are key to ecosystem health, resiliency, and productivity. Since its creation, the Forest Service has been using native plants in reforestation, rangeland improvement, watershed restoration, wildlife enhancement, mine reclamation, and myriad other planting and seeding activities (hereafter collectively referred to as 'revegetation'). Over the years, the Forest Service has made major strides in genetics research, seed collection, nursery propagation, storage procedures, and the design of appropriate management monitoring practices, particularly for native tree species associated with timber production.

- [Native Plant Materials Policy, A Strategic Framework](#)



An interagency genetic study of mountain brome, an important restoration species in the western United States.



A lupine seed production field.



A freshly planted seedling protected from cold and browse damage.



A student volunteer collecting native seed. Volunteer programs help the Forest Service fulfill its mission "*Caring for the land and serving people.*"

(/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/documents/NativePlantMaterialsPolicy_Sept2012.pdf) (September 2012)
(PDF, 4.4 MB)

Recognizing the need to maintain native plant communities as part of fully functioning ecosystems, Forest Service Chief Bosworth directed natural resource professionals from within the National Forest System, State and Private Forestry, and Research deputy area to develop Forest Service policy for promoting the use of native plants in revegetation projects on National Forest System lands. This policy (FSM 2070), issued in 2008, is designed to help combat invasive species, mitigate impacts of climate change, and maintain healthy forests.

- [Forest Service Manual, FSM 2000 - National Forest Resource Management, Chapter 2070 - Vegetation Ecology, February 13, 2008 \(/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/documents/FSM_2070.pdf\)](#) (PDF, 77 KB)

Key elements of the policy include:

- Native plants are defined as all indigenous terrestrial and aquatic plant species that evolved naturally in a defined native ecosystem.
- Native plant materials will be the first choice in revegetation for restoration and rehabilitation of native ecosystems where timely natural regeneration of the native plant community will not occur.
- Non-native, non-invasive plant species may be used when:
 1. Needed in emergency conditions to protect basic resource values,
 2. As an interim, non-persistent measure designed to aid in the re-establishment of native plants,
 3. When native plant materials are not available, and
 4. In permanently altered plant communities.
- Under no circumstances will non-native invasive plant species be used as plant materials for restoration, rehabilitation, or reconstruction of native ecosystems.
- The best information available should be used to choose genetically appropriate native plant materials for the site to be restored.
- A reliable source of native plant materials, either as seed or other vegetative propagules is essential for the successful implementation of the native plant materials program.

Questions and Answers

Q. Why is the Forest Service issuing a directive for native plant materials?

A. The Forest Service is issuing national policy and direction to guide the Agency on the implementation of a native plant materials program and the use of those materials.

Q. What are the major changes this directive implements that are different from previous policy?

A. This is new national policy. With the exception of reforestation policy, there was no previous national policy for the use of native plants.

Q. How will the new policy benefit the national forests and other lands?

A. We are providing direction that will be followed by all Forest Service units in the selection, development and procurement of native plant materials. The Forest Service will collaborate with our partners and other interested publics as we move forward in the implementation of this policy. This benefits the public, seed and nursery industries and other partners and cooperators in providing uniformity in the selection, development and growing of native plant materials.

Additionally, the policy promotes revegetation of native ecosystems with the use of native plant materials so that those ecosystems are self-sustaining and provide improved habitat for a broad range of species including threatened, endangered and other rare species.

Lastly the policy encourages the forests and grasslands to cooperate with other federal agencies, states, tribes and other organizations in the selection of native plant species; identifying sources of genetically appropriate plant materials and in the grow-out of these species so that they are readily available in large quantities and

economically feasible.

Q. Are any uses allowed for non-native species?

A. Use of non-native, non-invasive species will be limited.

Q. Where will native species come from?

A. We will collaborate with other federal agencies, states, tribes, and other interested organizations and publics as we begin selecting and developing native plant materials for revegetation, restoration and rehabilitation projects. Through this collaborative process we will identify seed transfer zones that provide for genetically appropriate native plant materials.

Q. Now that the policy is final, what happens next?

A. When the policy is final, the Forest Service will:

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of needs (type and amount) for native plant materials;
- Invest in a long-term commitment to research and development, education, and technology transfer for native plant materials;
- Expand efforts to increase the availability of native plant materials;
- Collaborate with other federal agencies, tribal, State, and local governments, academic institutions, and the private sector.

[Top of Page](#)

[Home](#)

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East Side Dixie Fire Mix		
Species	PLS lbs./acre	Total Seeds/SF= 93.50
Thickspike wheatgrass (<i>Elymus lanceolatus</i> ssp. <i>Lanceolatus</i>)	2.00	
Western wheatgrass (<i>Pascopyrum smithii</i>)	1.50	
Bluebunch wheatgrass (<i>Pseudoroegneria spicata</i> ssp. <i>Spicata</i>)	2.00	
Slender wheatgrass (<i>Elymus trachycaulus</i> ssp. <i>Trachycaulus</i>)	1.75	
Mountain brome (<i>Bromus marginatus</i>)	4.00	
Tufted hairgrass (<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>)	0.20	
Great basin wildrye (<i>Leymus cinereus</i>)	2.00	
Snake River wheatgrass (<i>Elymus wawawaiensis</i>)	2.00	
Idaho fescue (<i>Festuca idahoensis</i>)	1.00	
Indian ricegrass (<i>Achnatherum hymenoides</i>)	1.00	
Big bluegrass (<i>Poa secunda</i> ssp. <i>Ampla</i>)	0.50	
Sandberg bluegrass (<i>Poa secunda</i> ssp. <i>Sandbergii</i>)	0.50	
Bottlebrush squirreltail (<i>Elymus elymoides</i>)	1.00	
Sand dropseed (<i>Sporobolus cryptandrus</i>)	0.05	
QuickGuard Sterile Triticale (<i>Triticum aestivum</i> x <i>Secale cereale</i>)	5.00	
	24.50	

Commentary:

This is a reforestation species mix that was recommended for *suppression repair* (revegetation of firefighting bulldozer lines) after the Dixie Fire. Highlighted species, which make up the majority of seed stock in this mix, are non-native and/or GMO species. These recommendations run counter to the Forest Service's Native Plant Materials Policy as shown in previous pages of this document.

The reason given for the inclusion of these species, per private email communication with Forest Service staff, is that the Forest Service is undersupplied with native plant seeds because of the number of fires in California. This conundrum underscores the vital need for Tribal participation in seed banking and revegetation of culturally and ecologically appropriate, fire-adapted seed mixes in each Tribal territory in California.