

Questions for the Record on HR 1572.

Q: Mr. Beum, can you elaborate on how this bill would impact existing agency efforts to use native plant materials?

A: The Forest Service has a robust native plant materials program and policy which we use to implement restoration activities. This bill adds both duplicative policies and new policies that are not aligned with our current native plant materials policy. For example, as outlined in Section 301 (a) *The heads of the agencies shall collaborate, as appropriate, regarding land use responsibility to undertake the following activities related to native plant materials: (1) Identify seed needs and ensure the reliable availability of genetically appropriate seed.* This language is duplicative. The Forest Service currently identifies seed needs and works with partners including other federal agencies to ensure the reliable availability of genetically appropriate seed. Another example of new policy created by this bill that is not aligned with our current native plant materials is found in Section 201(a) where we are *to use locally adapted seed.* The Forest Service policy language requires genetically appropriate seed. Most often the genetically appropriate seed that the Forest Service uses is also locally adapted and locally collected. Our policy of using genetically adapted seed allows us the flexibility to manage for locally adapted seed and to manage for the native genetic diversity of populations. In situations where there has been a loss of genetic diversity from a site, and locally adapted sources are not available, our policy allows us replace it from genetically appropriate sources. More examples are available for your review at your request.

Q: What additional activities would be generated by this bill, given that many agencies already conduct similar activities under other authorities? For example, programs to catalogue and store plant materials are underway in USDA programs, but the bill would allow BLM to catalog and store plant materials.

A: Overall, this bill would not generate more activities by the Forest Service because current policy and actions are already in place and occurring in ways that accomplish the intention of this bill; no new actions are required.

Q: Do you believe that agencies covered under this bill, including yours, will need to develop or establish resources to generate plant materials that meet the definitions in this bill? For example, based on the definition of “proximate,” it appears that plant materials would need to be produced in very close geographic range to where they are used?

A: We can't speak for the other agencies; however, the Forest Service has historically focused our production efforts mainly on what we call “workhorse species”, which are species with wide geographic ranges. Because of the Forest Service's existing policy, addressing ‘proximate’ plant materials will not require additional resources. However, we also include species with smaller geographic ranges in our production program, especially pollinator forbs. See the Celebrating Wildflowers website for more information regarding native plant material usage in the Forest Service: https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/Native_Plant_Materials/developing/index.shtml

Q: Do you believe that requiring agencies to establish resources to generate plant materials that meet the definitions of this bill will incur additional costs to the agencies, and if so, how much? Are those costs sufficiently provided for in the appropriations authorized by the bill?

A: Native plant materials are generally more expensive than non-native materials and not all of the native materials needed by the agencies are currently readily available. The Forest Service has made modest investments in the development of native plant materials for over a decade. Currently, the bill only provides appropriations for the Department of the Interior.