

NATIONAL NATIVE SEED  
CONFERENCE  
MAY 17-20, 2010

ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS  
*SYNTHESIS*

- 180 participants
- 18 tables of 10 each
- 1.5 hours of discussion
- 360 dirty forks
- 52 pages of notes
- Thank you facilitators, note takers, and all participants!



1. Native Seed Collection



2. Evaluation & Development



3. Field Establishment



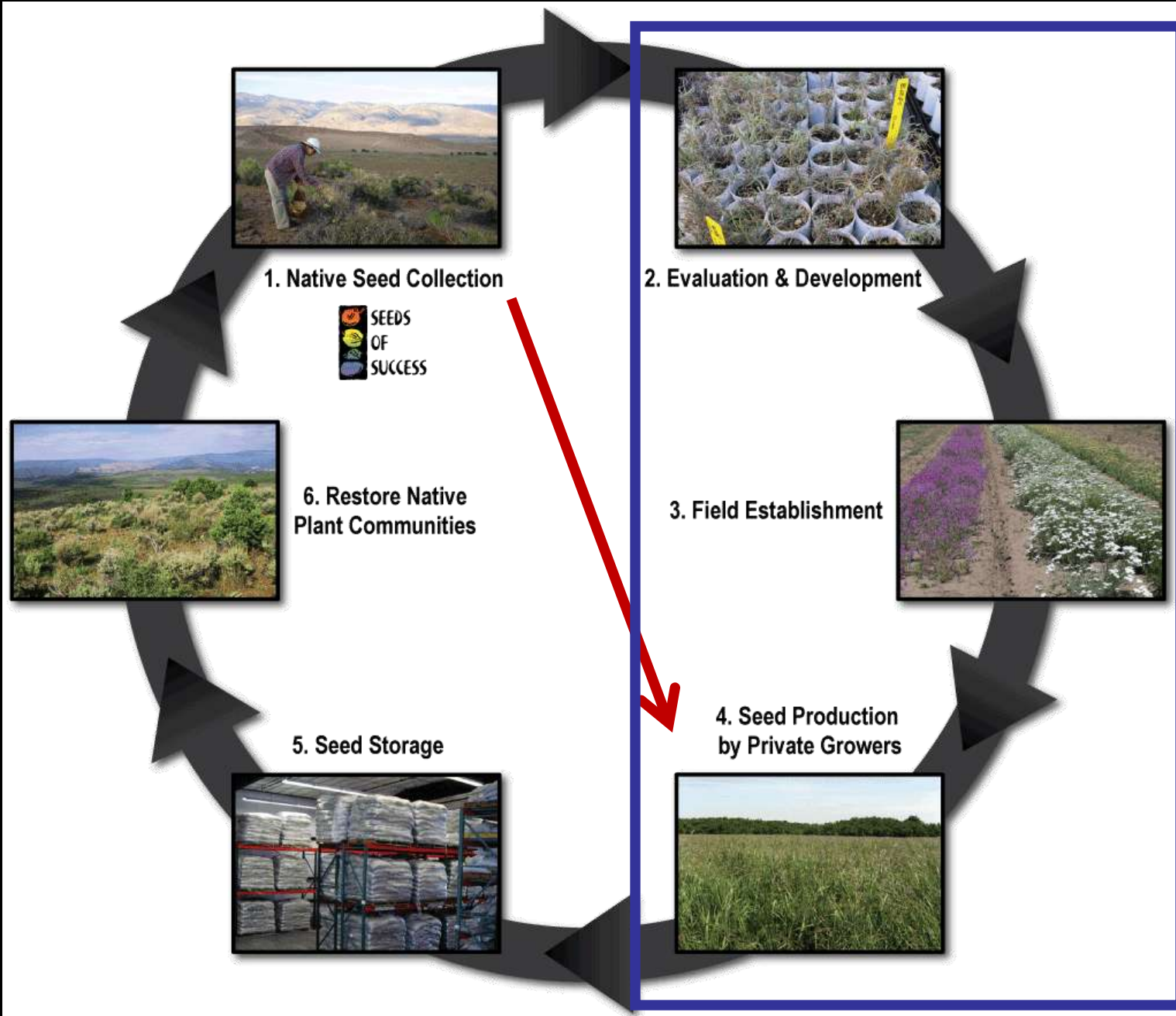
4. Seed Production by Private Growers



5. Seed Storage



6. Restore Native Plant Communities



# Themes

1. Conduct genetic research
2. Work together: Increase coordination, information sharing, technology transfer. Push for funding.
3. Develop a stable market

# Evaluation and Development

- Lack of clear seed transfer zones or guidelines
  - Conduct common garden studies for priority species
  - Provide study protocols to increase efficiency
  - In lieu of research, develop common-sense guidelines, possibly using ecoregions to start with, that can be updated as research or better information is available.

# Evaluation and Development

- Need priority species for each region (focus lists).
  - Select species that are competitive and can help suppress invasives
  - Include a manageable number of annuals, perennials, grasses, shrubs
  - Select species with wide geographic ranges and thus wide utility
  - Develop a decision matrix that includes genetic criteria to aid in selecting species

# Evaluation and Development

- Loss of genetic variation and/or fitness for restoration sites during the collection, development and production phases.
  - Conduct research to evaluate risks and avoidance strategies associated with drift, maternal effects, domestication selection, etc.
- Risks of maladaptation to restoration site, outbreeding with local populations.
  - Conduct research to evaluate the real-world magnitude of these risks on the landscape level.

# Field Establishment

- Inadequate genetic diversity to support use of seeds in multiple habitats (bet hedging) and avoid drift and other issues
  - Incorporate multiple seed sources into foundation seed
  - Provide increased guidance to wild collectors
  - Regularly renew cultivated fields with wild collected seed

# Field Establishment

- Lack of local adaptation
  - Include high diversity in foundation seed
  - Match seed sources to restoration sites

# Field Establishment

- Insufficient harvesting equipment
  - Provide incentives for new designs – include manufacturers
  - Share information about innovative equipment that is already available
  - Share equipment regionally

# Seed Production

- Contracts time consuming to initiate – lack of consistency and examples
  - Develop and make available standard contract templates for typical situations, from small to large scale production
  - Oregon and Washington have good examples to start from

# Seed Production

- Lack of market stability. Big seed buys too fire driven.
  - Establish annual habitat restoration policy, and purchase seed for this purpose
  - Develop funding leverage through the Farm Bill and USDA dollars for restoration.
  - Focus on workable priority species to make a short-list of focus taxa.
  - Engage industry groups to help pressure agencies and congress to make these changes.

# Seed Production

- Lack of market stability.
  - Accept high cost of local/small scale seed orders.
  - Buffer boom-bust nature of federal seed buys by purchasing seed and storing it so producers have guaranteed market even if there wasn't an epic fire that year.
  - Develop better outyear planning of seed needs by region and species.
  - Use longer term contracts (5 yr). Structure contracts to share risks.
  - Agencies should combine seed-buys.

# Seed Production

- Poor agency communication with growers (future seed production needs, genetic management needs, seed quality requirements, etc.)
  - Create regional liaison positions between agencies and industry
  - Create clear and consistent certifications/standards across agencies regionally or nationally

# Seed Production

- Poor intra- and interagency coordination
  - Create ‘intermediate agency’ such as a nonprofit to improve communication, level the field, and encourage overproduction for a secondary market
  - Demonstrate value of restored habitats for range, wildlife and other ecosystem functions to attract other programs

# Cross-step ideas

- Inadequate sharing of information resources, training
  - Establish online clearing house for research results, propagation protocols, contacts for assistance, etc.
  - Provide workshops, webinars, handbook, regional trainings, funding for staff to attend, include growers and academics in trainings. Whole curriculum with all information in one place.

# Cross-step ideas

- Funding to accomplish these tasks inadequate.
  - Partner with private groups to leverage funds from Federal government.
  - Partner with organizations with lobbyists.
  - Engage the American Seed Trade Association.

# Towards a National Native Seed Program