



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural
Resources
Conservation
Service

July 2007

National Plant Materials Program Strategic Plan

2006 - 2010







Mission: Helping People Help the Land

Mission of Plant Materials Program

“Develop and deliver plant science technology to meet the Nation’s natural resources conservation needs.”

Table of Contents

Mission.....	inside cover
Vision Statement.....	inside cover
Introduction	1
Background.....	1
Structure and Operation of the Plant Materials Program.....	2
Strategic Goals	3
Strategic Goal 1 – Identify and evaluate plants and develop technology for their successful establishment and maintenance to enhance and protect watershed values.	3
 Objective 1.1 – Conserve and enhance soil resources with plant science technology.....	3
 Objective 1.2 – Improve water quality and quantity with plant science technology.....	4
 Objective 1.3 – Improve air quality with plant science technology.	5
 Objective 1.4 – Enhance fish and wildlife resources with plant science technology.	5
Strategic Goal 2 – Provide plant materials and plant technology that are economically feasible for meeting resource concerns.	6
• Objective 2.1 – Provide for and promote the commercial production of NRCS plant releases so that adequate seed and plants are available for use in cooperative conservation programs.....	6
• Objective 2.2 – Maintain and improve the productivity of agricultural lands and watersheds through plants and plant management technology.....	6
• Objective 2.3 – Increase the alternative uses and specialized uses of conservation plant releases to meet emerging needs.	7
Strategic Goal 3 – Provide equal access for all Americans to the Plant Materials Program.	8
• Objective 3.1 – Deliver products and services fairly and equitably.	8
• Objective 3.2 – Promote the products of the Plant Materials Program through effective communication and program delivery.	8
• Objective 3.3 – Increase the use of plant materials to address issues of human health, safety, culture, and aesthetics.	8
• Objective 3.4 – Make effective use of Internet based technology to provide customer focused service	9

Vision Statement: Productive Lands – Healthy Environment

The NRCS Plant Materials Program shall be recognized as the Nation’s leading technical source of plant solutions and plant technology to meet natural resource conservation needs. The Program shall support NRCS programs to create productive lands within a healthy environment, and shall remain flexible to address emerging issues such as threatened and endangered species, invasive species, biomass/biofuel, carbon sequestration, and other conservation needs. The Program shall also create a work environment of excellence which attracts a diverse, enthusiastic, and productive workforce that will be highly trained.



‘Cape’ American Beachgrass
‘Cape’ was released in 1970 by the Cape May, New Jersey PMC. Its strong root system protects beaches and property along the Atlantic seaboard from waves spawned by hurricanes.

Note: This Strategic Plan of the Plant Materials Program was revised in July 2007, to reflect changes outlined in the 2006-2010 NRCS Strategic Plan.

Introduction

The Plant Materials Program incorporates the overarching strategies of the NRCS National Strategic Plan. These include:

- **Cooperative Conservation** to seek and promote cooperative efforts to achieve natural resource goals;
- **Planning on the Watershed Approach** to provide information and assistance to encourage and enable locally led, watershed-scale efforts; and
- **Taking a Market-based Approach** to facilitate growth of market-based opportunities that encourage the private sector to invest in conservation on private lands.

The Plant Materials Program will meet these strategies and customer needs for cost-effective vegetative solutions to soil and water conservation problems. The principal customers of the Program are NRCS field offices, which directly serve landowners and managers. Secondary customers include commercial seed and plant producers and other federal and state agencies that assist with the development of and utilize the technology developed by the Program.

Plants and plant technologies are important resources that enable the implementation of USDA conservation programs. No single tool, other than changes in land management, offers more versatility or is more cost effective for long-term environmental protection and improvement than plants. No agency is better positioned to deliver needed plants and plant materials technology nationwide than the NRCS.

Finding cost-effective solutions to soil and water conservation problems requires an integrated, multidisciplinary approach, involving all line and staff levels, as well as other government, academic, and private groups. Principal NRCS leadership roles are carried out by state conservationists, state resource conservationists, national technology support center plant materials specialists, state plant materials specialists, and plant materials center (PMC) team leaders. NRCS field office staff also play a critical role by assisting with plant collections, evaluations, and commercial seed and plant production. Together, these efforts result in a seamless delivery of the final product to the customer.

Effective operation of PMCs requires integration with other NRCS technical disciplines. This Strategic Plan outlines the goals and objectives for the NRCS Plant Materials Program and provides quantifiable performance measures.

The fundamental structure of the Plant Materials Program is sound. The Program meets its national conservation mandate in its potential usefulness, location of PMCs, and their physical and technical capabilities.

This Plan has been formulated using input from a wide variety of internal and external partners and customers, and includes information gleaned from a survey of field offices and non-federal partners. The Plan also mirrors the NRCS National Strategic Plan and incorporates its mission.

Background

The Plant Materials Program maintains a network of 27 Plant Materials Centers strategically located throughout the United States. The Program was created in 1935 as the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) Division of Nurseries. It later became the SCS Plant Materials Program, and is known today as the NRCS Plant Materials Program. The Program's mission has always been to find plant solutions to solve conservation problems.

The Program conducts its plant evaluation and selection activities under the guiding philosophy of Dr. Franklin J. Crider, first head of the Plant Materials Section: "In most cases nature has evolved a plant for almost every growing condition." Finding these uniquely evolved plants to meet specific conservation needs has been, and continues to be, the focus of the Plant Materials Program.

To date, Plant Materials Centers around the Nation have selected over 600 releases of grasses, legumes, forbs, shrubs, and trees. More than 400 of these releases are currently in commercial production. **These plants have an annual market value of over \$100,000,000. More importantly, these plants literally protect millions of acres from erosion across our Nation.**

"In most cases nature has evolved a plant for almost every growing condition."

—Dr. Franklin Crider

Structure and Operation of the Plant Materials Program

Plant Materials Centers (PMCs) work with associated Plant Materials Specialists based in ecologically distinct service areas. Together, these centers and specialists seek out and test plant technologies that:

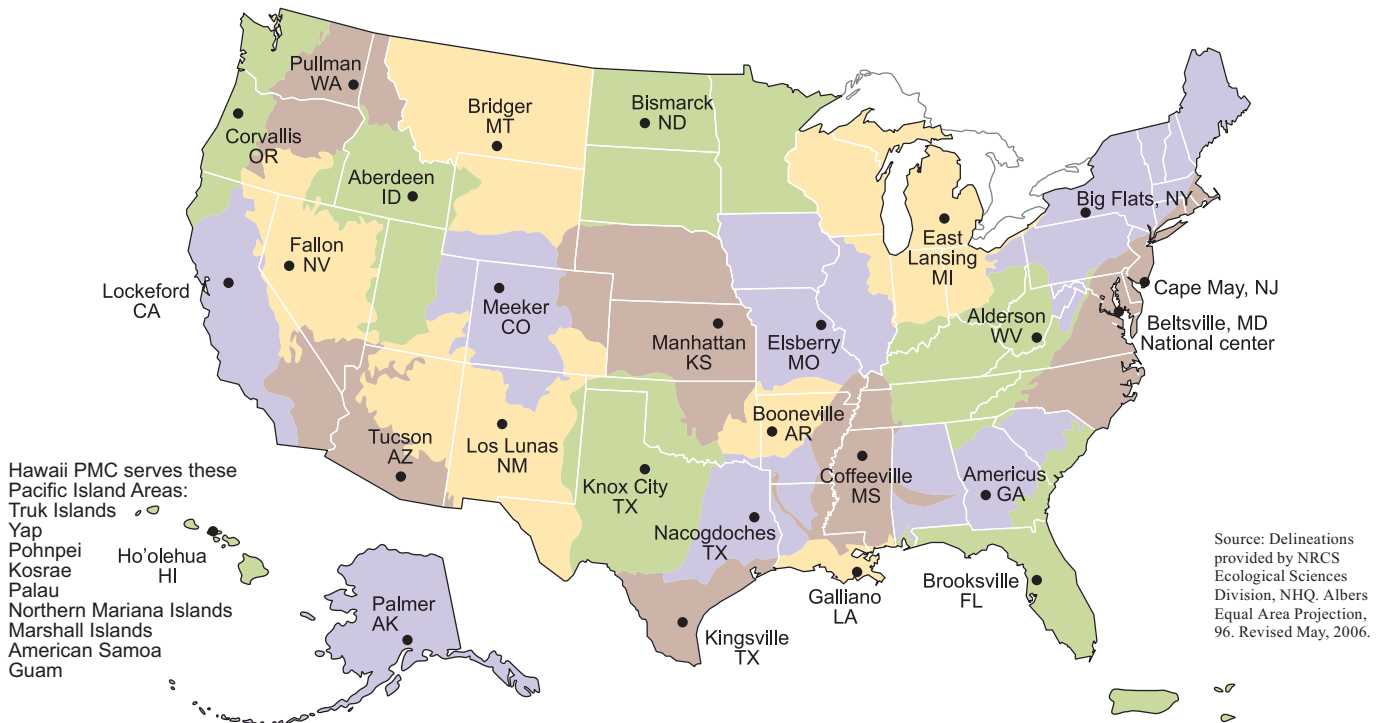
- Conserve and protect farmland, forest land, and grazing land resources.
- Restore and sustain healthy natural ecosystems.
- Conserve and enhance critical wildlife habitat.
- Mitigate diverse environmental and natural resource concerns.
- Provide economic and socially acceptable solutions.
- Support a safer human environment.

The Program's efforts and resources are focused on resource concerns for which existing plants or technologies do not exist or need to be modified for resolution.

PMCs evaluate plants for specific conservation traits, select top performing accessions, and make these materials available to commercial growers who provide plant releases to the public. PMCs also develop innovative techniques for land managers to use to manage a variety of conservation plants. Plant Materials Specialists are involved in this plant selection and technology development process, and transfer information about new plant releases as well as provide on-the-ground assistance with conservation plantings.

The authority to operate the Plant Materials Program is provided through the following laws and regulations:

- Soil Conservation Act of 1935 (Public Law 74-46, 49 Stat. 163; 16 USC 590 [a-f]) which provided the basic authority for the Soil Conservation Service (now the Natural Resources Conservation Service) Plant Materials Program.
- Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act of 1977 (Public Law 95-192; 16 USC 40) which ensures that the Department of Agriculture possesses information, technical expertise, and a delivery system for providing assistance to land users to address resource conservation issues.
- NRCS Policy on the Operation of Plant Materials Centers (1984) (7 CFR 613) which clarifies the role, activity, and function of NRCS Plant Materials Centers to support NRCS conservation activities.






Locations of the 27 USDA NRCS Plant Materials Centers and their respective service areas.

Strategic Goals




The Plant Materials Program has established goals to address the Mission and Management Goals of the NRCS National Strategic Plan. These include:

NRCS Mission Goals

Foundation Goals - include goals for the land uses and resource concerns that have always been the primary focus of our activities.

-  High Quality, Productive Soils
-  Clean and Abundant Water
-  Healthy Plant and Animal Communities

Venture Goals - include goals which address resource issues that are growing in importance as a result of current trends.

-  Clean Air
-  An Adequate Energy Supply
-  Working Farm and Ranch Lands

NRCS Management Goals

- Managing Human Capital

Plant Materials Program Goals and Objectives in Support of the NRCS National Strategic Plan

Strategic Goal 1 – Identify and evaluate plants and develop technology for their successful establishment and maintenance to solve natural resource conservation problems, which include protecting soils, improving air and water quality, and enhancing wildlife resources.

Plant solutions for natural resource problems help farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners meet the increasing level of environmental stewardship the public demands. Historically, plants have provided a cost-effective solution to many of the severe environmental problems faced by our Nation. As the scope of environmental concerns has expanded, a wider range of plant solutions are now needed to address these concerns.

Objective 1.1

Conserve and enhance soil resources with plant science technology.

While excess erosion has been reduced using improved plants and vegetative management strategies, persistent and new soil resource concerns require new conservation efforts. The biological, chemical, and physical processes that occur in high quality soils are important drivers of a productive agriculture. These basic processes have no substitute.

Soil degradation is not just the loss of soil through erosion. Biological, chemical, and physical processes can be interrupted even while the soil stays in place, through means such as improper management, compaction, crusting, subsidence, salinization, or loss of organic matter. Plants play an important role in conserving soil, improving soil organic matter, protecting water, and sequestering carbon.

The challenge is to maintain the Nation's soil resources as a means to achieve the multiple resource protection benefits of reduced runoff and erosion, increased carbon sequestration, and improved productivity and sustainability. Maintaining and enhancing the Nation's soil resources on a watershed scale will require proactive conservation planning and the application of appropriate plant materials releases and technology. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Mission Goal: High Quality, Productive Soils.

Baseline

Erosion control and reclamation/restoration on private and public lands continue to be a high priority need on cropland, forest land, rangeland, and mining land; along highways, stream systems, and coastlines; and in areas impacted by human-caused disturbances and natural disasters such as wildfires and hurricanes. There are an estimated 106.4 million acres of land where conservation and erosion control measures are needed annually. The Plant Materials Program currently supports NRCS efforts to protect or improve the health of 4.87 million acres of lands subject to excessive

annual erosion (PRS data, 2003). The use of selected or site-specific adapted plants and appropriate plant technology will play a key role in controlling erosion on these lands, with the added benefits of improving high quality, productive agricultural soils and reducing the invasion of noxious and invasive weeds on disturbed lands.

Responses from the Plant Materials Program customer survey (2004) showed recurring opportunities for the Plant Materials Program to accelerate work in:

- developing and transferring soil organic matter technology;
- sediment and nutrient management technology;
- release of native plants and legumes; and
- development of carbon sequestration technology.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- maintain foundation seed stocks;
- continue to improve technologies for existing plants; and
- select new plant species and technologies with the capacity to improve organic matter levels.

Performance Goal

- reduce erosion and improve reclamation/revegetation efforts on 5.2 million acres annually by 2010; and
- develop a procedure for on-farm research through the Conservation Security Program to increase the technology needed to assure high quality, sustainable, and productive soils by 2007.

Objective 1.2

Improve water quality and quantity with plant science technology.

All land management activities can be the source of sediments, nutrients, organic matter, chemicals, and pathogens in the Nation's streams, lakes, estuaries, and groundwater—and ultimately marine waters and coral reef systems. Sediment has been recognized as the largest contributor to degraded water quality. In addition, nutrients and chemicals applied in agricultural systems and urban landscapes may reach water sources through runoff and by leaching through the soil profile to contaminate groundwater. Plant materials and technical assistance will significantly reduce nutrient, chemical, and sediment runoff from cropland, forest land, grazing land, confined livestock areas, and urban landscapes.

In all regions, demand for water is increasing faster than available water supply. The Plant Materials Program, together with conservation partners, can help farmers, ranchers, and other land managers reduce water usage on agricultural and urban lands through improved releases promoting Irrigation Water Management (IWM), drought tolerant plants for hay and pasture, and xeriscape use in urban landscapes. This objective addresses the NRCS Mission Goal: Clean and Abundant Water.

Baseline

Water quality in wetlands, streams, and lakes affects human health as well as habitat and health for domestic animals and aquatic and terrestrial wildlife species. NRCS estimates that vegetative treatment on more than 46 million acres is

needed to control nearly all of the Nation's soil erosion that affects surface waters. Improvement of vegetation in wetlands, riparian areas, and urban areas through the establishment of vegetative buffers and bio-filters such as grass waterways, riparian buffers, and urban runoff bio-filter systems are critical to improving water quality through planning at the watershed scale. The Plant Materials Program supports NRCS efforts to protect or enhance 7.1 million acres annually to improve water quality (PRS data, 2003).

Responses from the Plant Materials Program customer survey (2004) showed recurring opportunities for the Program to accelerate water quality work in drought tolerant native plant releases, sediment and nutrient management technology, and noxious and invasive weed suppression and revegetation; to select better plants for grazing; and to develop technology to improve stand establishment.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- maintain foundation seed stocks;
- continue to improve technologies for existing plants;
- emphasize the study and release of native drought-tolerant plants to mitigate the effects of severe drought and flooding;
- collaborate with USDA-ARS and university researchers to select plants and develop plant technology to improve nutrient uptake;
- integrate native, drought-tolerant, low maintenance plants into the urban landscape; and

- select drought tolerant plants for irrigated pasture and hay-land to reduce irrigation water use.

Performance Goal

- continue to select new plant species and technologies to treat a minimum of 7.6 million watershed acres annually by 2010.

Objective 1.3

Improve air quality with plant science technology.

Odors, particulates, and greenhouse gas emissions generated through animal wastes and agricultural activities, such as the use of nitrogen fertilizers and on-farm fuels, degrade air quality. As urbanization encroaches on agricultural lands, communities at the rural/urban interface are becoming more sensitive to these issues from both land uses. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Mission Goal: Clean Air.

Baseline

The challenge is to identify and implement low-cost opportunities to reduce odor, particulates, and greenhouse emissions from agricultural sources.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- identify and develop plants and plant technology to mitigate air quality issues;
- provide soil vegetative cover to filter airborne pollutants and reduce greenhouse gases; and
- promote the storage of carbon in plant tissues and soil organic matter on agricultural land, forest land, and urban land.

Objective 1.4

Enhance fish and wildlife resources with plant science technology.

A healthy landscape provides critical habitat (food, water, and shelter) to a diversity of wildlife and aquatic species. Improvements to the landscape—including wetlands, riparian areas, streams, grasslands, rangelands, floodplains, and forest lands—create ecosystems that support wildlife and aquatic species while still allowing the land to be productive for the land manager. The use of plants to improve habitats has helped significantly in the past several years, and has yielded substantial benefits for fish and wildlife as well as the environment in general. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Mission Goal: Healthy Plant and Animal Communities.

Baseline

There are many opportunities to introduce wildlife-related vegetative components

or practices into conservation plans and contracts. Likewise, responses from the Plant Materials Program customer survey (2004) showed recurring opportunities for the Program to accelerate work in habitat restoration technology.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- emphasize the selection and release of plants and the development and transfer of associated plant technology to improve fish and wildlife habitat on the acreage contracted by the NRCS; and
- increase the use of plants and plant technology important to wildlife and aquatic species.

Performance Goal

- help restore habitats and enhance populations on 4.5 million acres annually by 2010.



‘Vermillion’ Smooth Cordgrass
‘Vermillion’ was released in 1989 by the Golden Meadows, Louisiana PMC. This native grass is instrumental in protecting tidal marshes along the Gulf of Mexico.

Strategic Goal 2 - Provide plant materials and plant technology that are economically feasible for meeting resource concerns.

Conservation plant species and plant technology are used to address a wide variety of natural resource conservation needs throughout the Nation. Plants offer a natural solution for stabilizing soil, improving water quality, providing forage for livestock, and improving habitat for wildlife. In order to provide market-based incentives to be used in conservation systems, plant materials must be affordable as well as readily available. The technology to establish and maintain plants in conservation systems must be easily applicable and tailored to field-level use.

Objective 2.1

Provide for and promote the commercial production of NRCS plant releases to ensure that adequate seed and plants are available for use in cooperative conservation programs.

The production of high quality foundation seed and plants by Plant Materials Centers is an important part of the process of delivering plants and technology for use in conservation. Seeds and plants are made available to commercial growers for large-scale production. Landowners and land managers purchase NRCS plant releases from commercial sources for use in reclamation work and for vegetating millions of acres that address their resource conservation and production objectives.

The relationship between the Plant Materials Program and commercial growers facilitates the rapid and affordable

production of seed and plants to meet user demand. With this market-based system in place, commercial production of Plant Materials Program conservation plants will meet anticipated needs in conservation programs. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Mission Goal: Healthy Plant and Animal Communities.

Baseline

For over 65 years, the Plant Materials Program has selected plants to meet critical conservation needs. The success of plant solutions for conservation work in the United States is based on the distribution of high quality seed, plants, and technical information from the Plant Materials Program to commercial seed growers and land managers.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- expedite the evaluation and release of native plants to solve identified resource concerns in the most efficient and economically feasible manner; and
- ensure that foundation seed or plants of all currently active conservation plant releases are maintained in sufficient quantities to be available in the market place as well as to growers for large-scale production.

Objective 2.2

Maintain and improve the productivity of agricultural lands and watersheds through plants and plant management technology.

Healthy plant and animal communities resist degradation when beset by natural disasters such as flooding and drought, and can quickly recover their beneficial functions. They combat invasive species, are pest free, and respond efficiently

and quickly to energy inputs to achieve enhanced yields. Educational and technical assistance entails providing data on appropriate plant species as well as disseminating information on ways to use the data to apply sustainable production techniques. Well-planned conservation practices that use appropriate plants and plant management are good insurance against drought, pests, diseases, and invasive species, and also result in improved yields. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Mission Goal: Healthy Plant and Animal Communities.

Baseline for Grasslands

There are about 588 million acres of private rangeland and pastureland in the United States. About 60 percent (355 million acres) are considered below the desired quality for grazing and do not meet the needs of wildlife (NRCS NRI, 1997). Through the use of selected plants and plant technology developed by the Plant Materials Program, the productivity of these lands can be improved while providing ecological benefits. In 2003, the Plant Materials Program impacted 3.7 million acres of grazing land, which were improved through NRCS conservation practices (as measured through PRS data).

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- maintain foundation seed stocks; and
- continue to improve technologies for existing PMC plants.

Performance Goal

- select new plant species and technologies to improve grazing conditions on 4.0 million acres annually by 2010.

Baseline for Croplands

About 100 million acres of cropland in the United States are considered below the

desired quality (NRCS NRI, 2001).

Through the use of selected plants and plant technology developed by the Plant Materials Program, the productivity of these lands can be improved while providing ecological benefits. In 2003, the Plant Materials Program impacted 2.6 million acres of cropland through NRCS conservation practices (as measured through PRS data).

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- maintain foundation seed stocks;
- develop legumes in rotation for energy conservation, nitrogen cycle, operation, and maintenance;
- support carbon sequestration; and
- increase the use of field borders and buffers.

Performance Goal

- continue to improve technologies for existing PMC plants and select new plant species and technologies to improve cropland conditions in excess of 2.8 million acres annually by 2010.

Objective 2.3

Increase the alternative uses and specialized uses of conservation plant releases to meet emerging needs.

Recent increases in energy prices faced by producers throughout the country emphasize the need to find new ways to improve the energy efficiency of U.S. agriculture. In the future, the challenge will be to improve energy efficiency in ways that maintain the productive capacity of the land while benefiting the environment. Development of more efficient machinery and selection of new plant varieties can improve energy efficiency.

While bioenergy and bio-products help replace fossil fuels, the challenge is to overcome barriers to economic feasibility and ensure that the production of energy raw materials is environmentally beneficial at the farm level. Opportunities exist to increase the use of conservation plants and plant residues in the conversion to alternative forms of energy and bio-products.

Native plant materials continue to be needed to accommodate temporary high velocity flood conditions and stabilize stream banks.

There are many opportunities to integrate existing and new conservation plant releases into the ornamental horticulture industry. Many of the plants selected for conservation attributes also have aesthetic and low-maintenance characteristics, such as low water usage and drought tolerance. In the landscape and ornamental nursery industry, there is economic potential to increase and market Plant Materials Program conservation plants and plant technology as a healthy way to improve both the agricultural and urban landscape.

Native plants (especially endangered plants) can be reintroduced and/or enhanced in settings where invasive and noxious weeds have proliferated. Revegetation is a critical step in effective invasive and noxious weed management. The public generally prefers native plants in these settings, and the Plant Materials Program has the potential to create native plant technology appropriate for revegetating weed-infested land. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Mission Goals: An Adequate Energy Supply, and Healthy Plant and Animal Communities.

Baseline

Customers responded to the Plant Materials Program Strategic Plan Survey (Dec. 2004) in different ways.

Each customer was provided the opportunity to list an opinion on the top three major activities the Plant Materials Program should undertake. Customers identified the need for work on invasive species as a major activity, and also identified biofuels as a needed major activity. Customers also identified developing plants and plant technology that would thrive under drought conditions as a major concern. Respondents also requested additional studies to benefit threatened and endangered species.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- collaborate with external agencies to develop bioenergy technology;
- identify and promote the use of native plants for soil bioengineering projects and projects experiencing temporary high water;
- identify and promote multiple uses for conservation plants such as native plants, especially those that attenuate invasive species, benefit threatened and endangered species of concern, and thrive under drought or flood conditions; and
- identify legumes to reduce energy inputs (N), carbon sequestration, and soil health.



'Old Works' Fuzzytongue Penstemon
'Old Works' was released in 2002 by the Bridger, Montana PMC. This beautiful native plant was collected in the Anaconda Smelter Superfund Site and is being used to help reclaim soil contaminated with heavy metals.

Strategic Goal 3 - Provide equal access for all Americans to the Plant Materials Program.

The Plant Materials Program has the potential to provide a wealth of information to landowners, land managers, and the public on the use and management of conservation plant species for the protection of the Nation's natural resources. The Plant Materials Program will investigate different delivery methods for the transfer and dissemination of plant materials information, and develop informational materials to ensure the widespread dissemination of its products.

Objective 3.1

Deliver products and services fairly and equitably.

It is the goal of NRCS and the Plant Materials Program to ensure that all people have access to information on conservation plants and plant technology. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Management Goal: Managing Human Capital.

Baseline

It is imperative that technical information developed by the Plant Materials Program be available to NRCS staff and conservation partners to address resource conservation problems.

Performance Goal

The Plant Materials Program will:

- develop an Outreach Plan to ensure

that its products and services are being provided fairly and equitably to internal and external customers by 2007.

Objective 3.2

Promote the products of the Plant Materials Program through effective communication and program delivery.

Increasing visibility and effective communication are the best and most cost-effective vehicles to ensure dissemination of Plant Materials products. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Management Goal: Managing Human Capital.

Baseline

The Plant Materials Program has utilized a Public Affairs Specialist (PAS) with excellent results. The creation of an electronic newsletter sent through a Listserv and the production of a new program video expanded awareness of the program, as evidenced through increased web site traffic and personal feedback. The heightened exposure and awareness of the program enhances people's ability to locate information to improve conservation efforts.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- carry out an aggressive communication and public information effort to maximize awareness of the program and ensure that potential users know what information is available from the program;
- use the Plant Materials website as the focal point of information and technology delivery so that anyone can get plant information at anytime; and

- ensure that plant fact sheets, plant release planting guides, technical notes, scientific articles, publications, and other technology will be entered and maintained current on the website.

Objective 3.3

Increase the use of plant materials to address issues of human health, safety, culture, and aesthetics.

By expanding the role of conservation plants, the Plant Materials Program will be instrumental in solving resource problems while also addressing human concerns such as public safety, health, culture, and aesthetics. This objective addresses the NRCS Strategic Plan Management Goal: Managing Human Capital.

Baseline

Historically, the Plant Materials Program has focused on the use of plants and plant technology to solve natural resource concerns. However, many of the plants and much of the technology developed can be employed for other purposes. For example, the use of drought-tolerant plants in traditional arid landscapes, termed "xeriscaping," has been important to help conserve water resources for homeowners and municipalities. In addition, culturally significant plants are very useful for many conservation practices. For example, sweetgrass is used for Native American ceremonies and crafts, and it is also a native species that can be planted in waterways and riparian buffers to reduce erosion and improve water quality.

Performance Activities

The Plant Materials Program will:

- identify and document multiple uses of plant releases;
- incorporate updated information into NRCS Field Office Tech Guide Standards and Specifications and USDA Plant Guides;
- promote pollinator-friendly plant species; and
- collaborate with external clients to accelerate the use of conservation plants to address human concerns, such as drought and cultural needs.

Objective 3.4

Make effective use of Internet based technology to provide customer focused service.

Many users of plant materials information gain access to resources via the internet. The Plant Materials Program strives to

fulfill the President's Management Agenda of E-Government by developing electronic resources to collect data as well as improvements of electronic information delivery, such as the Plant Materials Centers web site. On These web sites employees, partners and the public can find information on plant releases, plant studies, technical information, and recent news.

Baseline

In FY2006 the Plant Materials Program was performing a majority of communication tasks through E-Government.

Management Goal

The Plant Materials Program will:

- expand self service options to employees, partners, and customers by revising existing information and creating additional opportunities to communicate with new customers;
- expand capabilities to have documents accessible by typical search engines; and
- improve internal program opportunities by offering employees electronic learning courses.



'Cave-in-Rock' Switchgrass

'Cave-In-Rock' was released in 1974 by the Elsberry, Missouri PMC. This native grass is an excellent fuel for bioenergy.



'Streamco' Willow

'Streamco' was released in 1975 by the Big Flats, New York PMC. Its high stem density makes it a superb shrub to capture and keep snow off New England roadways.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all