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A Nontraditional Application for *Ammophila breviligulata*, American Beachgrass

Abstract

Ammophila breviligulata, American beachgrass, is a native of the mid-Atlantic coastal region from Maine to North Carolina and the Great Lakes and is the predominant plant species utilized for initial stabilization of frontal sand dunes. American beachgrass is a cool season perennial, rhizomatous grass that will grow to a 2 to 3 foot height and tolerate annual over-topping accumulations of sand up to 1 foot. This grass is a poor seed producer and must be propagated vegetatively. It will grow on sandy or other coarse textured soils on inland sites with or without high salinity, provided supplemental fertilizers are used. Culms of 'Cape' American beachgrass, a cultivar developed at the USDA-NRCS Cape May Plant Materials Center, were hand planted on a steep, extremely sandy, highly erosive highway construction site near Wardensville, West Virginia in March 2003. Objectives were: to control erosion and stabilize the site using a North American plant well adapted to the site's sandy Udorthent soil and to establish microclimate conditions conducive to succession by locally adapted plant species. Culms were planted on 2 foot centers and 2 culms were placed in each dibble hole along with 15 grams of 16-8-12 analysis slow release fertilizer tablets. Efficacy of the planting is monitored via visual observations conducted annually. 'Cape' American beachgrass has

clearly achieved the erosion control and site stabilization objective, and is providing a suitable microclimate for natural re-establishment of endemic species. The successful utilization of American beachgrass at this site demonstrates the potential for use of native plants in many non-native (man made) applications and settings.