Seed Industry Successes and Challenges of Wildland Seed Collections at Regional and Local Levels

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Level III Ecoregions of the Continental United States
(Revised April 2013)

National Health and Environmental Effects Research Laboratory
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Great Basin Edited Seed Zones for Grasses and Forbs

- Winter minimum 5 degree temp bands intersected with aridity bands to create seed zones

- Level III Ecoregion superimposed over seed zones to create provisional seed transfer zones.

- Small geographic areas merged

- Two Great Basin Ecoregions combined with Snake River Plain Ecoregion to re-name ‘Great Basin Seed Zone’

- 20 seed transfer zones represented on legend

Source: Western Wildland Environmental Threat Assessment Center
Granite Seed’s Recent Experience Under the PSTZ Approach - Success

- BLM FY2018 Seed Buy specific to 3 sagebrush subspecies (WY, Basin, Mtn) with Wyoming Big sage the greatest amount requested by far
- Bid details did not disclose to seed industry specific quantities desired within a given PSTZ; industry required to offer lbs within the PSTZ protocol, using own judgement for demand by zone(s).
- Industry required to research and consider 34 PSTZs within 6 Level III Ecoregions when responding to the bid.
- Awarded nearly 400,000 total lbs Big sagebrush after final field office needs compiled/refined during multiple award process
Overall successful but with some challenges....

• Big challenge but seed industry nearly fulfilled total award
• Regional scale of PSTZ geographically lends itself to collecting large quantities by multiple vendors/collectors
• Regional scale of PSTZ provides opportunity to locate and collect significant stands of sagebrush seed in areas where uneven precip patterns result in variable seed production
• Process still needs refining: 1) Award timing needs to be moved up to allow industry more time to execute on collections  2) Exclusive focus on “new crop collection” is flawed and also handicaps BLM’s ability to consistently be in position to procure the desired pounds
Experience with the Local Ecotype - Challenge

- Special project involving multiple stakeholders on Western Slope for Fall 2017 small quantity collections of 3 subspecies of Big sage in localized area
- Reconnaissance revealed drought conditions and poor seed production
- Travel distance challenged Granite Seed personnel to do reconnaissance, timely seed readiness checks, and seed collections
- Above factors, combined with the small quantities proved unfeasible with other wild-land collection commitments (namely BLM)
Summary

• PSTZs regional in scope and based on intersection of Level III Ecoregions, temperature and precip bands

• PSTZ process, as adopted by BLM, is example of win-win: ecotype collections achievable on a regional scale

• BLM PSTZ process still a work in progress, but government and industry are working together in a productive manner

• Limiting solicitation to only current year production dis-incentivizes seed industry to cold-store seed for large fire years, to the detriment of BLM

• Seed collections on an extremely localized level 1) present significant logistical challenges  2) brings higher risk into execution / success and 3) likely result in substantially higher costs to the customer
Questions?

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