



*Conserving native species and habitats through
restoration, research, and education*

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**Hundreds of Research, Industry, Land Management and Restoration
Practitioners Gather for National Native Seed Conference, Call for Concerted
Action to Address Native Seed Shortage for U.S. Restoration Efforts**

Research, Industry, Land Management and Restoration Practitioners gather at 2023 National Native Seed Conference (NNSC) to share scientific research and restoration best practices, connect regional seed partnerships, and advocate a national policy to address the shortage of native seed for restoration and reforestation efforts across the United States

(Corvallis, Ore.)—As communities across the U.S. grapple with the severe and often lasting impacts of extreme weather events made more frequent by climate change, hundreds of conservation and restoration professionals, land managers, and seed growers gathered in Washington D.C. on March 27 through March 30 to share best practices in restoration—and unveiled a bold agenda to expand the native seed supply chain and meet the growing need for native seed across the United States.

Seed producers, policymakers and ecological practitioners came together from across the nation with a broad set of goals: to connect regional seed partnerships, discuss opportunities to coordinate local restoration needs with native seed production, address the role of tribal sovereignty and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (T.E.K.) in restoration practice, identify the uses of native plants for wider climate adaptation and mitigation, and strengthen coordination across the native seed industry in the United States. The conference was held at the Westin Alexandria Old Town Hotel in Alexandria, Virginia and comes just weeks after a new report from the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) declared a national native seed shortage in the United States.¹ The National Native Seed Conference is an annual conference coordinated by the Institute for Applied Ecology.

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¹ [“An Assessment of Native Seed Needs and The Capacity For Their Supply”](#), National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, January 26, 2023.

In the wake of wildfires, floods and droughts, restoring damaged landscapes and habitats requires native seeds, but the U.S. doesn't have enough to meet the demand, even for its own federal agencies.² "Time is of the essence to bank the seeds and the genetic diversity our lands hold," the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM) report stated.

Tren Hagman is the Vice President of Granite Seed Company, one of the largest providers of reclamation & conservation seed and erosion control products in North America, and attended the Native Seed Conference on Monday.

"I am looking forward to sharing ideas for better planning around local ecotype species. As an industry we keep hearing there is a shortage of seed, but we all have warehouses full of inventory," said Hagman. "We all need to do a better job of planning ahead for the demand of local ecotype-sourced materials. Once there is consistent demand for these species and ecotypes, the industry will deliver."

In 2022, the federal government allocated \$20 billion in additional funding for habitat restoration and sustainable agriculture as part of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and tripled annual reforestation spending set under the infrastructure bill's REPLANT Act to tackle a four million acre replanting backlog fueled by intense, climate-driven wildfires.³ Both efforts to restore America's damaged habitats and landscapes will require investments in America's native seed supply chain, and an increase in the supply of native seeds in order to be successful.

Hedgerow Farms, a long-standing native seed farm based in Winters, CA, is just one of the many growers that attended the conference on Monday. "We are excited to continue to lead these efforts, and ready to step up to meet demand for local ecotypes as their importance is increasingly recognized by the scientific community," said Julia Michaels, Ph.D., a restoration ecologist with Hedgerow Farms. "We hope this conference will help bring more specificity to future demand and tangible roadmaps to plan for scalable, consistent production over the long-term."

Native seeds provide the plants and trees for habitat restoration and reforestation—but their vital role in the success of restoration projects has been largely ignored by policymakers until recently. Organizers of the conference hope to change that.

"We're drawing attention to the critical role of native seeds and plants in the long-term health and biodiversity of the planet," said Dr. Tom Kaye, Executive Director of the Institute for Applied Ecology. "At the same time, we must build a coalition of land managers, tribes, scientists and growers that have the experience, the knowledge, and the skills to provide the right seeds at the right time in the right place. This requires foresight and planning from all stakeholders. If we all pitch in, we can produce enough of the seeds we need to restore the land."

² ["We need native seeds in order to respond to climate change, but there aren't enough"](#), National Public Radio (NPR), January 23, 2023.

³ ["U.S. triples reforestation spending for wildfire devastation"](#), Reuters, July 25, 2022.

Kaye noted that to truly expand the supply of source-certified and region-appropriate native seed, the agencies must continue to build partnerships with growers and users of native seed, and educate the public on the ecological and economic benefits of native plants. Organizers called for concerted policy action to build a more robust native seed supply and industry which supports growers and provides more opportunities for economic coordination, especially as climate change increases the possibility of extreme weather events that often damage natural areas and disrupt communities.

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The [National Native Seed Conference](#) is an annual event sponsored by the Institute for Applied Ecology which connects Research, Industry, Land Management, and Restoration professionals, providing the premier opportunity to develop relationships and share information about the collection, research and development, production, and use of native plant materials. The 2023 National Native Seed Conference is dedicated to the science, practice, and policy of producing and effectively using native seed. The conference supports the America the Beautiful Executive Order, National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration, and the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. Sponsors of the 2023 Conference include the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Natural Areas Association, Hedgerow Farms, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the National Wildlife Federation, and the U.S. Forest Service.

The [Institute for Applied Ecology](#) (IAE) is a 501(c)(3) organization located in Corvallis, Oregon and Santa Fe, New Mexico which is committed to the conservation of native species and habitats. The mission of the Institute for Applied Ecology is to conserve native species and habitats through restoration, research and education. Our vision is a world where all people and wildlands are healthy and interact positively, biological diversity flourishes, and environmental challenges are met with a social commitment to solving problems with scientific principles. We provide a service to public and private agencies and individuals by developing and communicating information on ecosystems, species, and effective management strategies. Restoration of habitats is a primary focus, and we conduct this work through partnerships with a diverse group of agencies, organizations and the private sector. We link our community with habitats through education and outreach. Learn more about IAE at www.appliedeco.org.