Q: Most Important Roles for the Southwest Seed Partnership?

1. Be a bridge linking growers and users of native seed
    a. Be a regional coordinating hub and network for a variety of types of growers and native seed users.
    b. Clearing-house for native seed information in the southwest.
    c. Make available defined native seed terms that may have different meaning to growers and restoration practitioners (i.e., accession", purity, certification, etc.)
    d. Work with agencies to help coordinate demand by ecoregion.
    e. Facilitate knowledge sharing between growers and growers and restoration practitioners and agencies.
    f. Connect growers and restoration practitioners with equipment, methods, and seed mixes.
2. Support native seed growers
    a. Communicate demand, especially demand for ecotypes (and use other growers as a resource for learning about demand).
    b. Provide a place (*webpage*) for growers to find different agency requirements/guidelines for seed purity, etc.
    c. Facilitate small scale growers (i.e., Create a Grower Network that connects small growers with big growers and offer trainings to small growers. Encourage small-scale farmers to start with single species to learn requirements and build slowly. Create "Are you interested?" FAQ about becoming a seed provider. Incentivize for small growers. Develop spec sheet by seed species – such as number of seed per row or per acre - so that there is a starting place for small growers to plan their grow-out).
    d. Promote successful production and successful growers (i.e., Trainings leading to SWSP certification for growers to validate grower technical proficiency. Provide technical support person to growers. Accountability: Have SWSP person to follow-up with growers who receive precious accessions with idea that will not be able to continue to receive native seed if they are not making progress after 3 years. Help seed growers sell small amounts of seed by coordinating among growers).
3. Support native seed users/restoration practitioners
    a. Post lists of growers of native seed and grower profilers to provide to potential buyers (i.e., grower yellow pages with species offered by grower)(note: the Native Seed Network has a framework for this @ www.nativeseednetwork.org).
    b. Connect resource managers and restoration experts with users. Grower knowledge can be a resource to restoration community and can be facilitated through meet-ups.
    c. Improved communication between seed end-users. (Growers talk all of the time, restoration practitioners and projects could benefit from the same level of communication).
4. Promote native plant conservation
    a. Publicity and public education about native plants and their ecological values.
    b. Provide native plant volunteer opportunities.
    c. Help maintain established protocols for native seed.
5. Engage in research and development
    a. ID what types of seed work best under specific circumstances, especially impacted habitats.
    b. Help biologists refine species lists, zones, specs for projects.

   c. Identify difference in reclamation vs. restoration: which species suites are best used for each type of project in a specific area.
6. Conduct assessments and help predict demand
   a. Identify SHARED gaps in native plant development.
   b. Tie plant phenology and funding cycles to identify what is readily available each year and how much lead-time is needed for a specific source.
   c. Use climate and fire modeling to help USFS and BLM predict needs.
7. Collect native seed
   a. Coordinate wild, local ecotypic stock collections.
8. Sustain partnership through diverse funding sources
   a. Cultivate public-private support for the partnership through enhanced outreach working with groups such as NRCD, SWCD, and cooperative extension agents, etc.

Q: Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Pros and Cons

We decided to wait to vote on whether or not an MOU is appropriate for the SWSP so that partners had more time to consider the benefits and feasibility for their organizations. The SWSP steering committee will work on this question more and bring recommendations to the main group to consider at next year's stakeholder meeting or over email. Below is a list of pros and cons to MOU identified by breakout groups.

PROS

- Provides structures to committed stakeholders. Strategic plans can be re-built (working committees). Lays out expectations. Outlines levels of participation.
- Peer pressure. Formalized structure and commitment. Removes barriers to funding. Identifies the players. Strategic document.
- MOU is a vehicle to get people on the same page (should be simple and accessible). It spells out people's responsibilities and clearly outline some important information. Solidifies agreement.

CONS

- May be difficult for agencies to agree for specifics. Tendency to avoid risk. More hoops to jump through.
- Legal review. What is the purpose? Is it helpful?
- Developing between many parties could be time-consuming → would need a REALLY good facilitator and the potential to amend later on once primary partners get on board. Everyone needs to be part of the conversation.

MOU Considerations and Questions:

- MOU should be accessible and can be amended based on comments to the editor at any point. Make sure there is joint understanding/ network to make sure everyone is on the same page.
- What happens when agencies change administrations?

A sample MOU from the Willamette Valley Native Plant Partnership, a cooperative-style partnership, was shared with the groups to provide a starting place for discussion. One breakout group summarized

the sample MOU as follows: 1) cooperatively develop seed sources that could be produced at minimal cost, 2) agencies to share information, 3) educate and increase use of genetically diverse products, 4) each party can have different level of contribution, 5) MOU not a fiscal obligation, 6) not an exclusive agreement, 7) new members can come/go.

Seed Zones Group Q &A:

1. The SWSP can play a role in sharing findings from relevant native seed and restoration studies and we can also help to conduct research that is currently lacking (i.e. native plant materials cultivation R&D, seed zones, and establishment studies). Do you see any conflicts or partnership opportunities for the SWSP to engage in this type of research? No, this seems to build synergy with growers, universities and agencies in priority seed areas. The key partnership for seed collection, so long as the seed gets back to partners eventually. If you are careful, there should be no conflict (no conflict at this point in research & development regarding copyright or controlled information). Commercial growers provide the most efficient production and cleaning practices, and could thereby help development of production for R&D. Federal and state agencies are a vital point in the supply of seeds for R&D.
2. Due to an immediate demand for seed, many organizations working with native plant materials are producing without knowing if the material they are using is locally adapted. Because research takes a long time and requires a significant amount of funding, we also anticipate situations where seed for some desirable species will need to be put into production prior to seed zone studies. If there is a lack of information about appropriate seed zones for a given species, what is a reasonable process for deciding whether or not that species can still go into production? Ask more questions, use other factors (elevation, hydrology, etc), grow in separate fields, use locally adapted genotypes. Lack of info for seed. Cut a composite from Bower et al to get a 5 acre field small plots while you await the result of seed zone study. Composite collections. Seed collected and grown separately. Genetic research.

Creative Partnership Solutions Group Q & A

1. What challenges to you see in the development of a SWSP? Challenges: How do we get other people involved in the Partnership? How do we convince people to get involved without stepping on their toes? How do we educate the public about how this work will also benefit them? How can we "band together to advocate"-interdepartmental partnerships/ networks/ real collaboration? Is there a way for landowners to get involved directly? Is there a way to make them interested in being involved—like some form of reciprocity?
2. Do you have ideas about how to address those challenges?
    - Find trusted entity within communities (NRCD, SWCD, cooperative extension agents, watershed groups, etc.) and clearly communicating benefits of participation.
    - Forb education and program development. Maybe private sector could help with the forbs—public garden sector—something that attracts public attention.
    - Figure out strategic means to reach out to the public → to create better informed buyers.
    - Public outreach organizations (botanical gardens/ schools/ nonprofits devoted to outreach/ natural history museums). Make relatable resources for private stakeholders.

- Make sure public agency employees are also on board—i.e. get oil and gas folks on board with the priorities of the biologists.
- Build strategic relationships with folks that are already involved with ecological projects (networking with other private-sector relationships). BLM ranch community for example could be good/ trustworthy disseminators of information.
- Aggregating demand and supply.
- Create **visible volunteer opportunities.**
- **Host workshop events.**
- Centralize efforts & don't extend too far beyond your reach.

Cooperative Seed Production Group Q & A

Some of our grant contracts have allowed us to collect and produce seed with growers under contract and on speculation. There is the potential to share production fields. How do diversified funding sources complicate these efforts? What other obstacles should we be aware of when we are trying to develop collaborative production fields? Not enough agency representatives participated in this group to have a meaningful discussion about agencies sharing production fields. Instead this group, which included a number of farmers, discussed the potential for a Growers Cooperative that perhaps the SWSP could help facilitate. Such a cooperative could help network small growers with other producers of native seed (to compare notes and learn from each other), host trainings (Pueblo of Santa Ana Native Plant Nursery offered their education facility), and even increase awareness of specialized native plant materials available at different farms.

Target Species Group Q & A

What factors should be considered when choosing target species for production?

1. ID species practical for production (does it make financial sense/reasonable seed yield). Identify which species are not cost-prohibitive. Do market analysis to assess demand.
2. Ask people where the gaps are. Identify keystone species.
3. Specialized species for substrates.
4. Self-sustaining species – genetically-adapted (drought tolerant, establish easily, etc.).
5. Shift toward ecological function in lens of ecological restoration.
6. Factors that used to be considered: Erosion control, Cattle, Wildlife, Ecological function, Plant community – relating to historic conditions. Consider climate change.
7. Want forbs/shrubs.
8. Look to regulations.

Fairness to Growers Group Q & A

How do we make it fair to growers when deciding who gets the seed or the contract?

1. Enforcement of accountability for product certification.
2. Depend on experienced commercial growers and find a way to make it worth their while to share knowledge and equipment with smaller growers.
3. Develop coop seed processing facility?

4. Agency buys favor commercial growers, small growers would have to be subcontracted to commercial growers (this is where development of grower yellow pages would help smaller growers).
5. Have clear guidelines for determining "success" for an accession grow out.

Seed Quality Group Q & A

To the best of our knowledge, NM lacks a Pre-Variety Germplasm Seed certification program (see PVG handout). Discuss alternate ways to ensure seed quality for users of SWSP plant materials in production (see sample seed label from WVNPP). How could seed certification potentially serve native plant growers and users in NM in the future?

1) Communicate projected seed demand to growers.
2) Develop incentives for small/medium growers to increase diversity. Incentivize the process with small farmers to grow the forbs they need?
3) Coordination of local ecotype seed collection. Growers willing to let wild seed collection be done by SWSP instead of doing themselves, if they had full access to the seed. Would support a single protocol and reduce the risk of over-collecting.
4) Educate managers and support through species lists, zones, and protocols. SWSP can develop project type and habitat type seed mixes and protocols for agency bios.
5) Connect different people with equipment, methods, protocols, mixes.