



An Assessment of Native Seed Needs and Capacities: A National Policy Perspective for Federal Lands

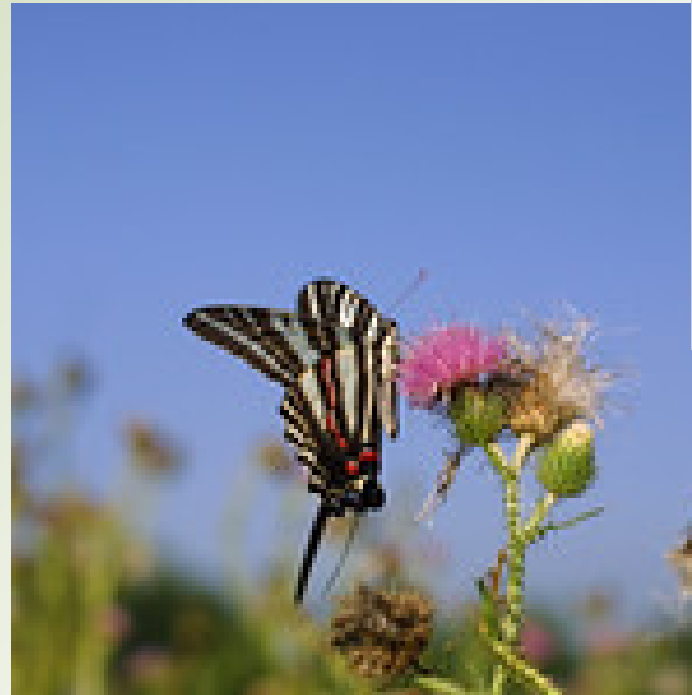


Left: USDA Forest Service; Right: NPS

*Presentation to the National
Academy of Sciences
November 12, 2021*

Defenders of Wildlife

- Mission
- Why we care about this issue
- What we do
- What we will cover today



NPS/Daniel Lombardi

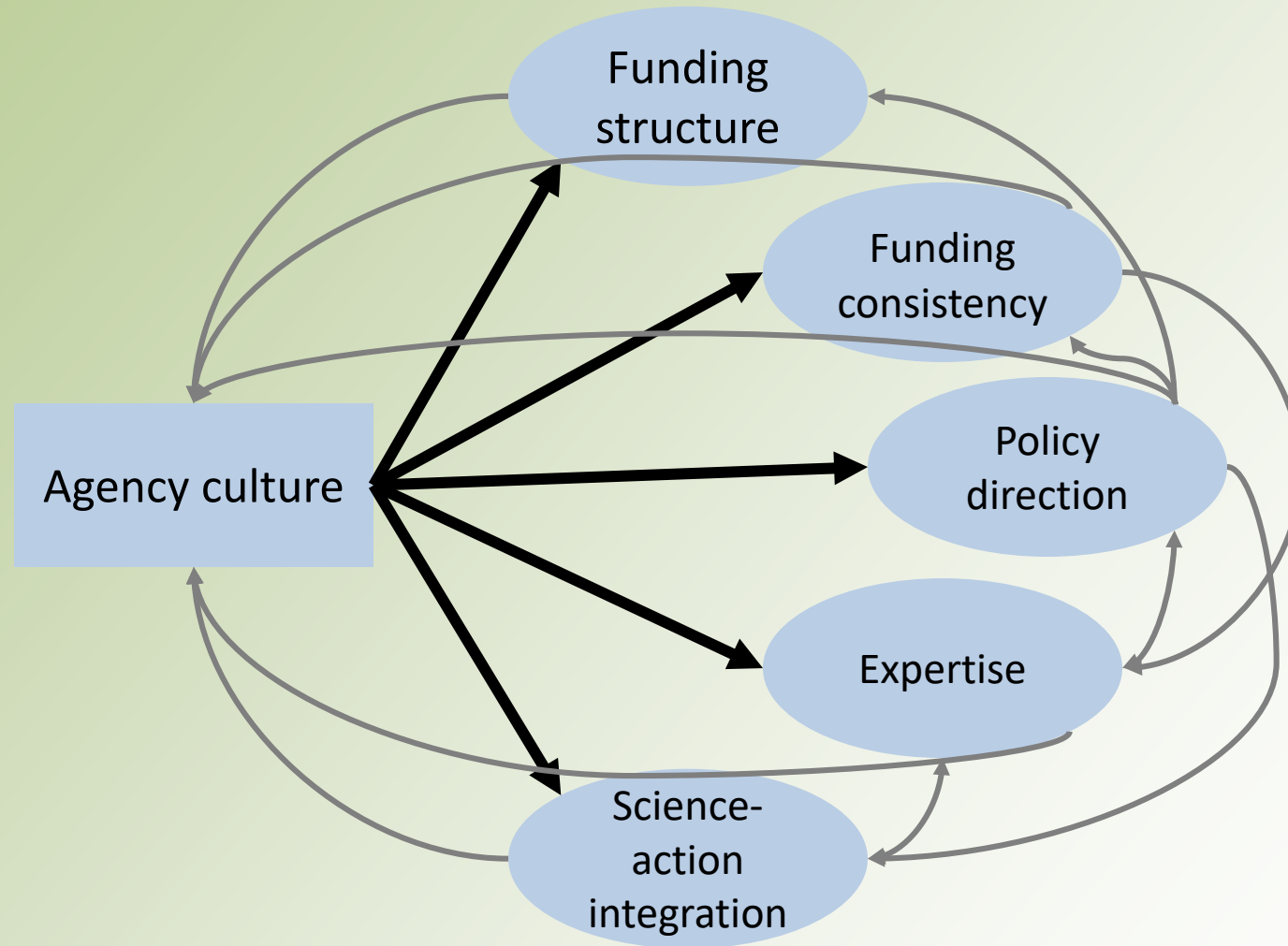


Stipulations

- Lots of acres being seeded
- Big implications for biodiversity
- Native species are not being used universally
- Native seed needs fluctuate
- Managing for federal lands as nature's seed bank is important



Barriers



Barrier #1 - Agency Culture and Buy-in

- Staff adheres to “how things are done”
- Fearful of using natives
- Training is lacking



Barrier #2 - Absence of Subactivity and Budget Line Related to Native Plants Conservation

- No dedicated budget line, associated staff, or accountability metrics
- Responsibility is owned by multiple programs and by none

Activity: Land Resources
Subactivity: Wild Horse and Burro Program

		2020 Actual	2021 Enacted	2022 President's Budget				Change from 2021
				Fixed Costs	Transfers	Program Change	2022 Request	
Wild Horse & Burro Management	\$000	101,555	115,745	+844	0	+36,007	152,596	+36,851
	FTE	147	139		0	+70	209	+70



Barrier #3 - Funding Not Consistent or Targeted

Proposed and Actual Appropriations for Plant Conservation and Restoration, BLM, FY 2018-2022

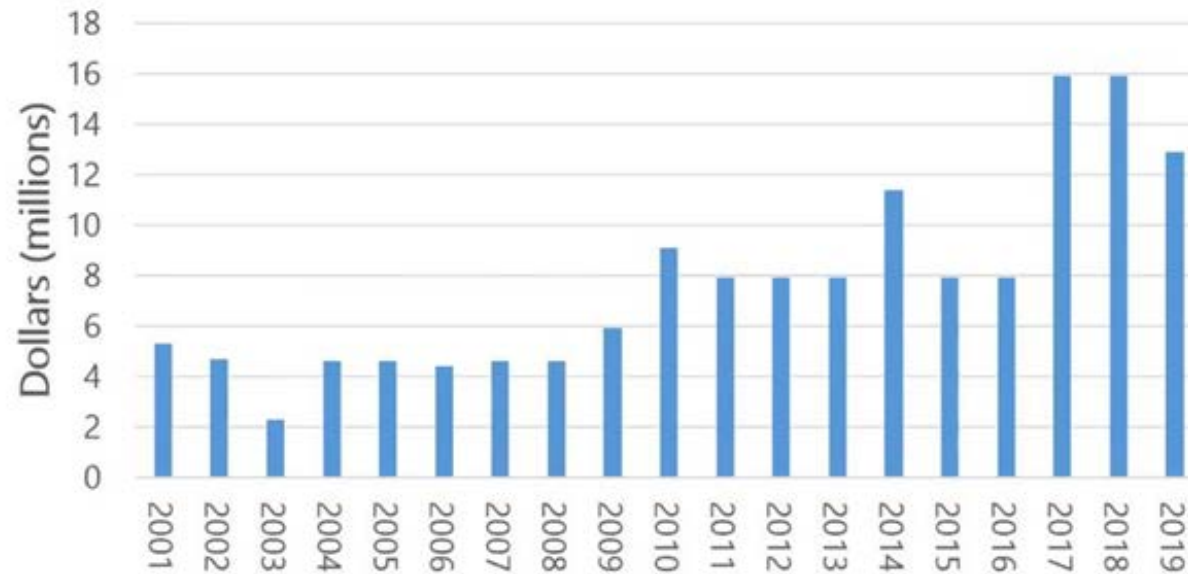
	FY 2022	FY 2021	FY 2020	FY 2019	FY 2018
President's proposal	No explicit number	No explicit number	No explicit number	No explicit number	No explicit number
House proposal	\$25 million	No explicit number	\$3 million (only Wildlife and Aquatic)	No explicit number	No explicit number
Senate proposal	\$18.6 million	"Consistent with prior years"	"Consistent with prior years"	No explicit number	No explicit number
Final enacted law	[Pending]	"Consistent with prior years"	No explicit number	No explicit number	No explicit number



Barrier #3 - Funding Not Consistent or Targeted

Allocations for Plant Conservation and Restoration, BLM, FY 2001-2019

Funding for BLM Plant Conservation and Restoration Program



Barrier #4 – Policy Direction

- FS and BLM have native plants policies
 - Loopholes
 - No consequences for noncompliance
 - Unenforceable
- Ecosystem restoration policy or protocols inadequate
- While FS has direction to manage for ecosystem integrity, BLM does not
- Performance metrics and tracking emphasize outputs (e.g., acres treated) over outcomes (landscape health)



Barrier #5 - Inadequate Expertise



Right: NPS; Upper: Southern Utah Wilderness Alliance



Barrier #6 – Researcher/Practitioner Disconnect

- Project results and lessons learned often not effectively shared or internalized
- Institutional tracking of vegetation project methods and outcomes lacking
- Restoration projects are often funded short term, denying opportunities for longer term monitoring or correction



BLM



Possible Mechanisms for Addressing Barriers

- Mechanism #1: Funding and accountability
- Mechanism #2: Proactive native plants material planning
- Mechanism #3: More expertise
- Mechanism #4: Enhanced coordination



Mechanism #1 – Programs, Funding and Accountability

Native plant conservation/ecosystem restoration programs with

- Policy direction
- Dedicated budget line
- Outcome-based performance measures

“To maintain and recover the natural diversity and distribution of native plants on public lands...”



Mechanism #2 – Proactive Planning for Native Plant Materials

- Based on past needs and scenario planning
- Basis for plant development and storage decisions
- Enabled by consistent funding



Mechanism #3 – More Expertise

“To get right seed in the right place at the right time – need the right botanist in the right place at the right time.”



NPS/Melissa Sladek



Mechanism #4 – Enhanced Coordination

- Investment in and encouragement of ecoregional hubs
- Deliberative institutional connections between scientists and practitioners



Opportunities

- Positive initiatives can be continued and replicated
- Awakening around extinction crisis, climate crisis, pollinator crisis, etc. that is fueling new interest and initiatives – e.g., Executive Order on Tackling Climate Change, Climate Conservation Corps





Questions?



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BLM Seeding Projects, 2000-2020. Source: USGS Land Treatment Digital Library								
State	# of Projects	Total Project Acres	Native Only (#)	Native Only Acres	Native & Non-Native (#)	Native & Non-Native Acres	Non-Native Only (#)	Non-Native Only Acres
Oregon	1,036	5,938,930	89	572,669	109	2,943,809	13	50,333
Idaho	648	6,394,158	151	1,091,966	235	4,770,996	10	18,634
Wyoming	248	602,613	17	27,241	9	31,989	0	0
Nevada	757	6,277,284	132	644,229	381	5,121,450	30	55,698
Utah	514	2,402,511	11	81,524	324	1,933,126	8	9,028
Colorado	560	672,683	46	143,730	85	243,725	2	322
Arizona	102	362,033	11	15,700	6	3,562	0	0
New Mexico	579	1,527,215	7	1,166	20	10,306	2	37
California	404	2,476,922	56	695,323	7	89,452	2	79,281
Washington	129	1,203,296	21	129,958	20	830,785	0	0
Montana	272	145,803	15	36,116	4	2,015	1	80
Western US	5,249	28,003,448	556	3,439,622	1,200	15,981,215	68	213,413
			11%	12%				



The House Report for the FY2001 Interior (DOI) Appropriations **directed the BLM (and USFS) to develop a long-term program to manage and supply native plant materials** for use in Federal land management restoration and rehabilitation.

