Working Group Sessions on Communications and the Government/Private Nursery Issue[1]

Kurtis L. Atkinson [2]

Abstract.--Facilitated working group sessions were held to develop lists of actions to improve communication and cooperation among nurseries in the Great Plains, and reduce the conflict between the government and private nursery sectors. These actions may be used as a starting point to improve working relationships between all nurseries.

Session I: Communications

A working-group exercise was held to identify areas in which forest nurseries could cooperate, communicate and share ideas. The attendees were divided randomly into four groups, and led through the process by a trained facilitator. It was structured as follows:

Purpose

Find ways to increase communication and cooperation between forest nurseries.

Desired Outcome

A list of opportunities for increased cooperation and communication between forest nursery organizations.

Process

Nominal Group Technique

Results

The results from the four groups follow. No attempt was made to consolidate these lists. The asterisks (*) denote items given a high priority by each group and were the only ones presented to the entire assembly.

Conclusion

It is hoped these results will stimulate interchange between nurseries, and perhaps serve as the basis for a formal method of exchanging and sharing information. The participants themselves must take the initiative to further develop these ideas into a workable method to take advantage of the. opportunities which are evident.

Group I

* 1. List of tree seed, seedlings and surpluses
  2. Political issues facing nursery business
  3. New cultural practices
* 4. Share information on pesticides and new insects & diseases
* 5. Co-op seed collection
  6. Lists of salvage or replacement equipment
  7. Tested modifications in nursery equipment
  8. "Bugs & Cruds" problems and solutions
  9. Interacting with locally operated nurseries
  10. Quick response on first time problems

[2]Kurtis L. Atkinson is Assistant Director of the Forestry Division of the Okla. State Dept. of Agriculture, Okla. City, Okla.

11. Use of by-products, recycling, etc.
* 12. Improvements in safety
13. Bareroot precision sowing
14. Facilities that may be available (contract/otherwise)
15. Species list
* 16. Nursery practices which enhance outplanting survival
17. Human resources available for consultation
18. Alternative labor sources /employment opportunities
19. New insect & disease information
20. Development of national grading standard
21. Seedling testing
22. Packing containers (type/cost)
23. Germinating problem species
24. Effective control of weeds
25. Improving customer relations
26. Odd species seed availability
* 27. Improved seed and seedling storage
28. Good tiers (taers)
29. Bareroot vs. containers
30. Re-cycling to save costs; tubes, boxes, etc.
31. List of suppliers, costs, bulk ordering
32. Cooperative studies of cultural practices
33. Results of seedbed densities
34. Sample contracts
* 35. List of current nursery studies
36. Grading & handling of bareroot stock
37. Outplantings, contracts, contractors, equipment
38. Bookkeeping practices
39. Research & observation of new methodology
40. University resources (testing person power)
* 41. Innovative ways for seed stratification
42. Accurate forecasting needs & wants (market data)

Group II

* 1. Surplus/shortages of seedlings & seed
2. Quarterly recaps of productivity and activities; a procedure for dissemination
* 3. Educational program, i.e., training of staff, foremen, & nursery personnel (management, computers, etc.)
* 4. Seed collection, seed source i.d., purchasing seed, cooperation
5. Pooling of resources to promote more intensive tree improvement program between states
6. Incentives to increase productiveness of seasonal labor

7. Consolidated purchasing of materials and services
8. Interagency, state and regional cooperation on I&E
* 9. Mechanical innovations/developments
10. Sharing of equipment and supplies in the event of breakdowns
11. Cooperative growing of seedlings
12. Personnel needs
13. Better feedback on plant material success from the field
* 14. Information system that is applicable to nursery management and administration (principally PC software)
15. Exchanging expertise in specialized area
16. Equipment specification and performance
17. Vendor listing by categories and region
18. Join together to market products
19. Provide cooperative R&D on problems and opportunities that are common to nurseries
* 20. Information exchange of specific cultural situations and problem solving, including: pesticides, pests, nutrients, soil/pesticide interactions, innovations, seed handling, collection, processing, etc.

Group III

* 1. Day to day cultural and operational tips
2. Record keeping
3. Harvesting techniques
* 4. Who's doing what (research, etc., names of contacts)
* 5. Listing of nurseries, species, capacities, addresses, phone numbers, etc.
* 6. Equipment technology & shared equipment performance information
* 7. New laws relating. to chemical use, personnel management, environmental constraints (in understandable form - do's & don'ts)
* 8. Promotional techniques & materials
9. R.I.P. information sharing
* 10. What's and How's in connection with herbicide use
* 11. Inventory: surpluses, shortages & prices
12. Surplus supplies inventory
13. Relate seedling quality to field performance
* 14. Problem alert system
15. Job openings
16. Seed availability - price
17. Techniques of inventory control, sales, and delivery management

*   18.   Software needs & availability
    19.   Methods of packing
    20.   Cost reduction techniques
    21.   Evaluation of seed sources for different products

Group IV

    1.   Success/failure in weed management, herbicides, why?
    2.   Insect alerts, aphids/hoppers
*   3.   What expertise do others have in specific areas?
*   4.   Software that others use such as storage & retrieval of cultural and production information
    5.   Training opportunities
    6.   Sharing, coordinating, interpreting data
    7.   Telecommunications network
*   8.   How inventories? Accuracy rates, costs, procedures?
    9.   Calibrating mechanical seed sowers, what accuracy experienced?
    10. Combined inventories of spare parts
*   11. What supplies in common and where acquired (boxes, chemicals, etc.) possible coordination of purchasing.
    12. Surplus seed and seedlings
    13. Surplus equipment
    14. Available services (tissue analysis, diagnosis, etc.)
    15. Seed sources (especially hardwoods)
    16. Comparing germination data
    17. Coordinating equipment development
    18. Coordinating job opportunities
    19. Bulletin board service with telecommunications
    20. Seedling packing containers and medium
*   21. Success or failure of plantations
    22. What policies or guidelines do others use? (size of seedlings, complaints, many more)
*   23. Success/failure – pest management, fungicides, fumigants, insecticides, why?
    24. New materials available for pest control
*   25. What criteria others use to determine seedling quality? Equipment used? Which best to predict field survival?
    26. Comparing clean seed yields
*   27. Ideas about formal research and informal trials underway at other nurseries, results.
*   28. Availability and use of climatic data to plan planting schedules and make yield predictions.
*   29. Successes/failures in soils management (pH, fertilization, etc.)
    30. Storage temperatures by species.

*   31. What species are others growing? What cultural practices?
*   32. Planting methods, methods of reforestation, equipment, etc.
    33. Invite a friend to lunch and share information.
    34. Tonight is ladies night in the bar.

Session II:
Government vs Private Nurseries

A second working-group exercise was held to address the government /private nursery issue. The attendees were divided randomly into three groups, each with a trained facilitator and recorder who coordinated the process. It was structured as follows:

Issue

Private sector concerns about competition from publicly operated nurseries.

Purpose

1.   Stimulate participants' minds about things they or their organization can do to help reduce concerns about this issue.

2.   Document the suggestions of this group of experts, close to the issue, for use by various organizations who may be studying the issue.

Process

Facilitated Discussion

Results

The results from the three groups follow. No attempt was made to prioritize the ideas with-in the groups, nor to consolidate the statements for the conference as a whole.

Conclusions

The result of this session will be provided to the National Association of State Foresters to use during their consideration of this issue. The participants should also take the initiative to further develop these ideas into a workable, cooperative and mutually agreeable plan of action.

GROUP 1

1. Artificially set seedling prices from government nurseries higher than private sector, on state by state basis.
2. States develop a policy statement related to public nursery activities, with private sector participation.
3. Contract with private nurseries to produce stock for use on public lands.
4. Establish a nursery advisory board, with representation from all sectors.
5. Assure selected (certified) seed sources are available to all growers.
6. Public education about the need for quality seed sources, species, quality of planting stock, etc.
7. Regional coordination of nursery policies, etc.
8. Assure private sector is included as an option during public agency technical assistance (CRP).
9. Establish basic standards of stock quality, seed sources, species selection.
10. Public and private sectors should target market areas.
11. Nursery Board act in conflict resolution.
12. Define, clarify and continue to evaluate the need for public nurseries.
13. Public nurseries become more involved in private associations (e.g., AAN, State Association, etc.)

GROUP 2

1. Public nurseries should develop marketing policies with input from private and public sectors.
2. Develop joint promotional/ educational effort to encourage tree planting.
3. Develop nursery advisory boards by state/region involving all sectors - public (state & federal) and private.
4. Personal contact with private nurseries for the purpose of information exchange by field and nursery personnel.
5. Sponsor a public nursery inventory surplus list for distribution to local private nurseries for seedlings that are available for sale.
6. Public nurseries should charge their actual production costs (including costs of land and overhead).

7. Utilize private nurseries to provide flexibility rather than expand public nurseries (includes contracting special needs, trading stock, etc.)
8. Develop a positive medium for information/technology transfer promoting cooperative partnerships.
9. State/Federal Forester rep. should belong to State Nursery Assoc.

GROUP 3

1. Increase communication among all groups.
2. Share in each others planning process.
3. Increase supply contracts to private nurseries (state & federal).
4. Moth ball marginal state or federal nurseries.
5. When comparing quality and cost, use the same criteria and accounting procedures.
6. Establish regional advisory boards to address needs and impacts.
7. Moth ball or contract out low demand species.
8. Limit the programs eligible for discounted seedlings.
9. Sales from government nurseries to private nurseries.
10. Study competition issues in other industries. How do they resolve problems?
11. All public nursery managers join their state's nursery association.
12. Have people involved in harvest planning on advisory boards to help predict the future.
13. Separate state and federal issues when talking about alternatives. Separate conflicts/address separately.
14. Show and tell at public nurseries for private nursery managers.
15. Examine decentralized seedling procurement in the federal system.
16. Make sure advisory board members are knowledgable.
17. Make sure spokesmen from private sector are expressing the majority opinion.
18. Standard grading for seedlings.
19. Develop an action plan.
20. Implement.