

A Washington Office Update on the USDA Forest Service Genetics R&D

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Within the USDA Forest Service, the National Program Lead for Genetics & Biodiversity Conservation Research and Development is housed within Sustainable Forest Management. This position supports policy formation, provides input on priorities and processes, facilitates inter-agency genetics communication, and responds to legislative and executive branch inquiries related to genetics. More importantly, it serves about 30 Forest Service geneticists and genetics-users by facilitating communication and through leadership that addresses national-level research concerns. In that capacity, I will review the process and results of the recent \$20 M BIL solicitation for reforestation and revegetation. I will also review progress on concerns raised by FS geneticists, including data storage and archiving, high-performance computing, staffing and the genetics infrastructure of the National Forests, and coordination with National Forests (NFs) and Tribes concerning seed sources and management. Although the mandates of the Endangered Species Act and National Environmental Policy Act are hardwired into public lands management, I hope to facilitate a strategic vision for how USDA-FS R&D Genetics & Biodiversity Conservation supports species conservation as part of a new strategic plan for R&D Genetics. Any strategic plan must consider the rapid changes in genetics technologies, the diversity of the American public, and the needs of both the NFs and SP&T forestry - including plant and animal pathology - on 'All Lands' public and private. In helping to shape the future of USDA-FS genetics, the ideas and concerns of geneticists and genetics-allies attending SFTIC are especially important and earnestly requested.