STRATEGIC PLAN

ROSE LAKE PLANT MATERIALS PROGRAM

GREAT LAKES REGION

INDIANA, MICHIGAN, OHIO, WISCONSIN (ILLINOIS)

JUNE 23, 1997

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Introduction

The Rose Lake Plant Materials Team services the Great Lakes Region. This includes the states of Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin and parts of Illinois. It was recognized that the role of the Plant Materials Program had changed in response to concerns identified by the local Plant Materials Committees. While the nature of the program makes it responsive to client needs, there existed a need to view these changes from a broad perspective, as well as include input from partners and prospective partners. In response to that need, this Strategic Plan was developed. The purpose of this plan is to provide broad guidance as to the general direction of the Rose Lake Plant Materials Program.

Process

In order to start the Strategic Planning process a team, made up of NRCS representatives from all five states, was assembled. This team developed a vision statement, identified the program's strengths and weaknesses and developed a list of concerns and directions the Plant Materials Program should address in the future. NRCS representatives, partners and potential partners were then invited to comment on this framework through meetings held in all five states. Nearly fifty individuals made one hundred and seventy-four comments on twenty-three issues identified by the original Plant Materials Strategic Planning Steering Committee. These issues and comments are listed in Appendix C.

Vision Statement

An innovative program, integrated within NRCS operations, that is responsive and flexible to meet traditional and nontraditional customer needs and resource concerns.

Summary

The many comments and issues gleaned from the meetings have been condensed into the following manageable and understandable list. When the comments and issues were analyzed some very broad trends emerged. These are listed below with the percentage of comments for each category. Under the third category, New Technology, are listed the types of new technology needed.

1) Communication and Partnerships - 47%
2) Technology Transfer - 37%
3) New Technology - 16%
    a) Native Plants
    b) Soil Bioengineering
    c) Wetlands
    d) Prairie Restoration
    e) Urban Forestry
    d) Sustainable Agriculture
    f) Plant Production

Some care needs to be exercised when making such broad generalizations. Also the perspective of the individual and their understanding of the purpose of the Plant Materials Program needs to be considered. However, it is clear that the Plant Materials Program required to meet the client's needs represents a significant departure for the traditional Plant Materials Program of the development and release of plant cultivars.

There was a strong feeling that much of the information and technology needed in the field already existed in some form. A recurring theme was the use of partnerships to obtain this information and deliver it to where it was needed.

Many of the comments were very general while others were very specific. Many of them could apply to more than one issue or category. The analysis of the comments and issues were used to develop the staffing plan in Appendix A and the recommendations given below.

Recommendations

1) Provide adequate staffing and resources.

2) Utilize partners to address client needs and resource concerns.

3) Be aware of opportunities to address resource concerns, form new partnerships and identify nontraditional clients and needs.

4) Improve the communication process. This includes the use of new technology such as the internet.

5) Emphasize native plants.

6) Focus on new approaches and technology in plant material activities.

7) Increase the effectiveness of promoting and marketing of the Plant Material Program and it's products.

8) Provide training and information on plants and the use of vegetation in resource conservation.

9) Conduct frequent technical meetings of NRCS staff on a four state basis in the Midwest Region.

APPENDIX A

STAFFING PLAN BASED ON STRATEGIC PLAN

This plan is based on an analysis of the Strategic Plan. It includes staff required to meet current commitments as well as staff time required to address the additional concerns identified in the strategic plan.

Position	Staff Years
Plant Materials Specialist	2.0
Plant Center Manager	1.5
PMC Staff, Professional	1.5
PMC Staff, Labor	3.0
PMC Staff, Clerical	.5
Public Affairs Specialist	1.0
Native Plant Specialist	1.0
Wetland Specialist	1.0
Range Conservationist	1.0
Computer Specialist	1.0
Ecoregion Specialist	one per ecoregion
Urban Forester	1.0
Sustainable Agriculture Agronomist	1.0

[illegible] staffing [illegible] identified in appendix C [illegible]

APPENDIX B

STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF THE PLANT MATERIALS PROGRAM

These strengths and weaknesses were identified by the Plant Materials Strategic Planning Steering Committee and commented on during the public review sessions.

STRENGTHS

1) Personnel. Designated plant experts that could be utilized as shared positions by the states. For example the present personnel could provide plant ecologist functions.

2) The program is working on high priority issues such as: grazing land initiatives, streambank stabilization and plant species with wildlife benefits.

3) The plant materials program positions NRCS to take advantage of new environmental issues such as: endangered species, wetlands, soil bioengineering, restoration and native plant landscaping. This allows NRCS to market itself to new customers.

4) The plant materials program is responsive to new environmental issues.

5) The program is already moving in the right direction.

WEAKNESSES

1) Insufficient resources.

2) Low priority in relation to other NRCS activities.

3) Past use of exotics.

4) Has not taken adequate advantage of similar groups or agencies.

5) Poor information transfer on activities, plant requirements etc.

6) Lack of technology to transfer information.

7) Plant materials needs not being adequately articulated.

8) No recognition of plant materials work by DC's.

APPENDIX C

ISSUES, CONCERNS AND PUBLIC COMMENTS

Below are listed the issues and concerns identified by the Plant Materials Strategic Planning Steering Committee and the comments received during the public review sessions held in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

1) **Better coordination between plant material centers.**
   a) Continue ongoing activities.
   b) NE Illinois reps to Rose Lake Meetings.

2) **Better coordination with other partners.**
   a) Contacts by Plant Materials Specialist.
   b) Contacts by Plant Material Committee members.
   c) Invite and be invited to meetings with partners.
   d) Partners on Plant Materials Committees.
   e) Mechanism to establish non-profit organization to bring in partners.
   f) Establish a national exchange of plant data with The Natural Conservancy
   g) The PM program needs to be aware of and utilize the data available through the U.S. Forest Services "Forest health Protection - Beneficial Insect Management and the Gypsy Moth Revegetation programs."
   h) The PM program should utilize the data available from the "Botanical Gardens". In some cases they are doing similar or identical work.
   j) There is a need to have a meeting to discuss specific plant materials needs with the Ohio Nurseryman's Association.
   k) Improved communication needed to disseminate USDA plant materials private seed firms for propagation and distribution to the consuming public.
   l) Partnership mailing list.
   m) Involve key partners, ie. IDEM for Wetland mitigation.
   n) Information to IDNR, SWCD and others who distribute plant materials.
   o) Make sure we can do what we promise. Don't over extend.
   p) # 3 & 4 NRCS regional seminar with partners.
   q) Partnership with seed buyers who have money with projects, Ducks and Quail Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, Grouse Group, etc.
   r) Non profit groups as working partners.
   s) Making connections to with non profit groups.
   t) NRCS shouldn't always be the lead agency.
   u) Be sensitive to partner needs.
   v) Develop long term, permanent relationships with partners.
   w) NR Regions, IN State example.
   x) DOT Partnership.
   y) I-70 DOT Woody Planting Project.
   z) In House Partner Conservation Field Day.
   A) IDEM - Money for training and projects.
   B) Leave space for comments and volunteering.

3) **Better marketing to the public of the plant materials programs accomplishments and successes.**
   a) Publish success stories.
   b) Publish state newsletters.
   c) Develop marketing plan.

3) d) Lack of confidence by native plants groups.
   e) Hire marketing professional. Non-Agency. Marketing firm to overcome negative native plant image.
   f) Articles to local newsletters. (Natural Area Council)
   g) Report trails that didn't work as a learning experience.
   h) The PM program needs to better inform politicians of the work and accomplishments of the PM program. (Invite to field days and workshops.)
   i) The PM program needs to utilize the "Garden Writers" for local newspapers to get new and useful information to the general public.
   j) NRCS should better advertise the PM program and provide more opportunity for customer input on critical issues relating to plant materials.
   k) Internet page.
   l) Internal marketing - IN ELM. Partnership today. PMC web site.

4) **Publicity.**
   a) Public Affairs Specialist should attend plant materials meetings.
   b) National level multi-media.
   c) Public affairs strategy.
   d) Utilize field days and other opportunities to educate farmers on the utilization of plants to address their resource concerns and profitability.
   e) Promote plant materials to District Conservationists and Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
   f) National publications, trade publications, agricultural magazines, IN Association of Nurseryman, Prairie Farmer, Farm Bureau, association newsletters, grouse mailing list, CTIC, Ducks Unlimited, Quails, Pheasants, Buy Seed.
   g) Promoting PM committees
   h) IASWCD Annual Conference.

5) **Native materials grown in native sites or eco-regions.**
   a) Address at state plant materials meetings.
   b) Work with state certification agencies (native source ID certification.
   c) Develop commercial producers/sources of locally native species. Don't alter plants by selection.
   d) Local sales of that are not suitable (is a problem).
   e) Acceptable definitions of a native (plant). Who and what purpose.
   f) Disseminate out of area activities and successes. (Iowa Highway Project)
   g) Genotype variability varies by species, needs research.
   h) Utilize nursery awareness of locally adapted species.
   i) Directory of Native Plant Sources (vendors).
   j) We need to utilize more "native" species when revegetating and with landscaping.
   k) The Ohio Seed Industry, Ohio Nurseryman's Association and Turf Association needs information on what the native and non native seed needs are in order to redirect their efforts to meet their customers needs.
   l) There is a need to identify rare and endangered species and expand their availability.
   m) Increase use of Source Identified Certification.
   n) State nurseries native plant activities - Local collection.
   o) Commercial native plant nurseries.
   p) Develop native plant sources list with partners.

5) q) Native plant food plots.
r) Emphasis on plant communities. Establishment. Processes.
s) Species list by region may be available

6) Flexibility to address customer needs, especially non-traditional customers.
a) Revise state plan of work.
b) Revise state long range plan.
c) Nontraditional change to emerging markets.
d) Partnerships need to reach nontraditional customers (public education).
e) Input from partners when revising plans.
f) Plant on contaminated sites. Center for Bio-remediation, University of Michigan (Brown Fields).
g) Landfills, what can be planted on top.
h) Farmers need better access to plant materials data.
i) More professionals need to be educated in the use of plants in the design and constructions of projects, e.g. engineers.
j) USDA should promote the BIOmass ethanol production system whereby plant materials are utilized to produce fuel.
k) Need to incorporate plant knowledge into drainage systems recommendations.
l) Karner Blue Butterfly and Blue Lupine, IN Lake Dunes partnership.
m) Target and educate other industries, mining, development, etc.
n) Highway WS grass mgt.

7) Internal customers, DC's, what is the public asking them for.
a) Address at local meetings (DC, watershed, regional).
b) Customer education.
c) Partnerships to identify alternative species.
d) Outdoor labs for field planting, wildlife habitat.
e) Need more communication (PM committee).

8) Soil bioengineering, especially riparian and streambank stabilization.
a) Field trails.
b) Training sessions (multi-agency).
c) Storm water retention facilities, fluctuating water levels, work with developers. Field Plantings.
d) Package of species for various sites (light, soil, shade, flow, etc.) 319 Grants, especially urban. Economics. Cost estimates.
e) For improving water quality we should investigate the use of vegetation to treat polluted water and stabilize eroding areas along streams. The use of hydrophitic plants capable of assimilating pollutants (heavy metals, nutrients or acid mine drainage) should be investigated.
f) Easily maintained woodys for streambank and education.
g) PM committees set up soil bioengineering training, include partners.

9) Wetland plants.
a) Information transfer.
b) Information transfer.
c) Wetland plants around detention ponds in urban areas. State guide (IN) being developed. DNR lead for county drain boards.
d) Get out Wetland Plant Guide. Fish and Wildlife partnership.
e) INPAWS has National Plant Detention Pond Specs.

10) Prairie restoration.

a) Information transfer.
b) Information transfer.
c) The PM needs to work more closely with state and federal forestry associations on prairie restoration.
d) O & M prairie restoration, on publication Ducks Unlimited and prescribed burning.

11) Information transfer (Internal technical training).

a) Training of personnel.
b) Fact sheets/Technical notes.
c) Field training.
d) Assistance to updating Tech Guide and urban Planning, especially native materials.
e) Guidelines on plant propagation and production. (Referenced to #9 and #10.)
d) Develop and serve as a clearinghouse.
e) Make each other aware that each is an audience.
f) Native Plant Criteria. (Develop an acceptable definition - potential Great Lakes National Program Office, GLNPO, proposal.)
g) Directory of Native Plant Sources on computer (GLNPO).
h) Plant identification training (from seed-seedling-mature, etc.).
i) A "Vendors List" is needed listing commercial producers and growers and what they are producing. The Ohio Nurseryman Association has a source vendors list of their members.
j) Information transfer needs to be improved.
k) Need a regional as well as a state vendors list for plants and seeds.
l) Better information designation.
m) Data collection center. Internet page. Need partners. ACD info center.
n) Keyed library on FOCS. Take advantage of job sheet update, especially on FOCS.
o) Tech transfer Internet moderated and unmoderated list. Interactive (questions).
p) Information transfer - use of local sources to deliver information to customers. - Training.

12) Tribal councils - Propagation of cultural plants.

a) Identify needs.
b) Field trails.
c) Plant increase.
d) Native Americans in Urban areas, explore non-council opportunities.

13) Ecological restoration.

a) Identify opportunities.
b) Field office awareness and planning.
c) Eradication of exotics, management process to keep exotics in check and encourage natives. Form partnerships. Park managers need information.
d) Needs to work with mining companies and associations on reclamation acid mine drainage techniques with plants.
e) The PM program should investigate a potential role in "Bio-Remediation". (Using soil and plants to biodegrade hazardous waste.)

14) Research data base. Make use of plant related work that has been done by universities, government agencies and other groups. Provide field offices with access to this information through computers.

a) Datashare for Plant Materials Specialist and Plant Materials Center.
b) Make datashare available at the field office level.
c) Include State office.
d) The PM program needs to develop a database that identifies what work is being done at each PMC. Seed producers and nurseryman can utilize this information.
e) Plant research that is done by universities, government agencies and other groups needs to be available via internet or through other electronic data sharing.

15) Plant Specialists by eco-regions.

a) Propose that State Conservationists establish these positions.
b) Management commitment in the form of resources (time, people). Regional contacts - plants. Natural Resource Regions.
c) NRCS needs more agronomists, resource specialists.
d) Generalists vs. Specialists controversy.

16) Field office recognition of opportunities.

a) Provide training to field offices to recognize traditional and nontraditional opportunities to provide services to our customers.
b) Effects of deer on landscape, deer proof planting techniques.
c) Make opportunity list. ID existing opportunities and list. Take advantage of existing opportunities.
d) Pasture diversity (species), native plants (WS grass), Productivity Index Standards, coal mineland restoration, reclaimation/productivity issue, acidity, use of trees.

17) Techniques for establishing and using plants.

a) Information transfer.
b) Native flora establishment differs from traditional "all at once planting".
c) Nursery awareness of how valuable their experimentation is, (anecdotal information).
d) Need more information on techniques to establish rare and endangered plants and how these plants can best be used.
e) Develop a program similar to the Pennsylvania crownvetch cover crop system to reduce erosion. This "living Cover program" involves interseeding agronomic crops into crownvetch.
f) USDA needs to help develop site specific specifications for plant material use.

18) Better evaluation of project effectiveness.

a) Publish results.
b) List of potential publications.
c) Review of past projects. Capture information from old field trails.
d) Annual reports.

19) Urban customer emphasis.

a) Work with developers and realtors.
b) Be part of the urban initiative.
c) Homeowners groups, park districts, forest preserves.
d) Nonattractive (wildlife) plants.
e) Aggressively adopt and implement identified future directions.
f) Urban, suburban, plants and technology for urban market.
g) NRCS should consider the employment of more landscape architects.

20) Participate in trade shows to form partnerships.

a) Evaluate possibilities.

b) Attend potential partner meetings. Native plants. Eastern Native Plant Society. Find out NRCS representative.

c) The PM program representatives need to attend local, state and national trade shows to share information and obtain information on customer needs.

21) Plant materials training course on basic information.

a) Develop and deliver regionally.

b) NRCS and their partners need training on how to utilize the PM program to address site specific and area wide resource concerns. the PM program needs to be integrated into the day to day activities of NRCS and it's partners.

22) Sustainable agriculture concepts such as insect habitat.

a) Form partnerships with universities.

b) More plant materials are needed to make agriculture more productive on marginal land. There is a need for higher producing forage grasses and legumes for pasture and nitrogen fixing cover crops for cropland.

c) Ohio has a need for better forage species that will allow year round grazing. Species are needed that stay green through the winter and provide quality feed value.

d) To make livestock production profitable, grazing management must be utilized. This need is especially strong in southern Ohio. Forage species and grazing techniques need to be developed and implemented quickly to save the family farm and improve the economy of the area. The following measures are recommended.

1) Develop economical grazing systems.
2) Select good grasses for the system.
3) Identify opportunities for scientific exchange. (To find grasses and grazing techniques that will help meet Ohio's needs.)
4) Find forages for winter pasture

e) Integrate animals and plants for maximum production and pest control

f) Focus on how we can better utilize plants to improve farm profitability

g) Explore the use of farmers to produce plant materials for sale. This would improve their income potential.

23) Agroforestry

a) Deep rooting woody plants, don't compete with crops, produces annual crop, thrives in the shade. Means of establishing and something that will establish.

b) Training is needed on "Agro-Forestry". Employees need to understand what it is, what it can do and where it can be used.

c) Have forest product species been researched within the plant materials program? Tree species capable of erosion control should be identified and publicized.

APPENDIX D

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Tom Ward - USDA NRCS
Bill Glass - Illinois DNR
Larry Stritch - USDA Forest Service
Mike Mason - Illinois DNR Nurseries
Joe Bybee _ Illinois Department of Agriculture/BSWC
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Doris Scully - USDA NRCS
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Jim Norris - Indiana DNR
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Roy Hall - USDA NRCS
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Tom Hines - Ohio DNR, Division of Reclamation
Donald Mason - Ohio DNR, Division of Oil and Gas
Wes Berry - The Nature Conservancy - Ohio Chapter
Karl Gebhardt - Ohio Farm Bureau
John Armstrong - Ohio Seed Improvement Association
Michael Epps - Ohio Nurserymans Association
Jeff Dickson - Ohio Nurserymans Association
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