

The National Academies of
SCIENCES • ENGINEERING • MEDICINE

**BOARD ON AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL STATISTICS**

Committee on an Assessment of Native Seed Needs and Capacities

**March 16, 2021
(Via Zoom)**

**FINAL AGENDA
4:00 – 5:00 PM EDT**

4:00 pm	OPEN SESSION – Public Welcome Welcome, Brief Committee Introductions and Introduction of Discussants Susan Harrison, <i>Committee Chair</i>
4:05 pm	Monica Pokorny, Plant Materials Specialist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Washington, DC Gord Pearse, Agronomist, Bruce Seed Farm, and Past-President, Montana Seed Trade Association
4:35 pm	Committee Q&A
5:00 pm	Adjourn Public Session

DISCUSSANT BIOSKETCHES

Monica Pokorny joined NRCS in 2016 as the Plant Materials Specialist for Montana and Wyoming, working in Bozeman, MT. As the Plant Materials Specialist, she tests plant materials and planting technologies for conservation uses. Monica completed her bachelor's degree in biology with a botany emphasis and wildlife minor at the University of Montana (1995) and holds a master's degree from Montana State University in land resources and environmental sciences (2002). Her work experience is broad and includes ecological restoration, invasive plant management, land management, wetland restoration, and botany and wildlife surveys. After completing her masters, she worked at MSU researching and implementing strategies to convert weed dominated lands to desired plant communities using revegetation and restoration techniques. Monica then spent four years working for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes restoring a variety of wildlife and wetland habitats throughout the reservation. Prior to joining NRCS, Monica worked as a consultant involved mostly in environmental surveys, permitting, reclamation, and post-reclamation monitoring for mining, pipeline, and transportation projects.

Gord Pearce is General Manager of Bruce Seed Farm. Bruce Seed Farm produces, processes, and markets 25 different crops, predominantly perennial forage grass and legume seeds, including native plants, wildflowers, and cover crops. Bruce Seed Farm is unique in the scope of species it produces. For some varieties, it is the largest or only producer of them in the nation. Bruce Seed Farm wholesales products grown in Broadwater County into virtually every western state and Canadian province, though its local retail business is primarily with seeding contractors involved in the many reclamation projects around the state that keep Montana beautiful.

Bruce Seed Farm has 15 full time employees in Broadwater County. Bruce Seed Farm also hires high school students for summer help and out of state contractors primarily for spot spray weed control. Bruce Seed Farm recently purchased Northwest Seed Enterprises in Billings MT. Northwest Seed Enterprises four employees process and package seed produced by Bruce Seed Farm and local alfalfa seed growers, and distribute forage, reclamation, and native seed in Montana and Wyoming under its own brand.

Gord has been a fierce advocate for agriculture all his life. He has been involved in seed production of some sort for over twenty years. He moved from Canada to Townsend in 2009 when he took the job at Bruce Seed Farm. He has also served as Director on various boards, such as the Saskatchewan Forage Council, Saskatchewan Canola Growers Association, Native Plant Society of Saskatchewan, and the Canadian Seed Trade Association. Outside of agriculture, he is a member of the Rotary Club of Townsend, and enjoys his winter passions of hockey and skiing as time allows. Gord and his wife of 21 years, Cindy, have two daughters; Ashley, who lives and works in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and Michaela, a recent graduate of Broadwater High School and current student at MSU-Billings.

FRAMING QUESTIONS:

For Monica Pokorny

Please tell us what a Plant Materials Specialist does, and your experience in integrating natives and local ecotypes into CRP or other seed mixes, their performance on the range/field and any insights about the supply of native seed. Help us understand the goals of users and how those goals relate to seed choice.

Among the things that the committee is trying to understand with respect to the CRP are:

- 1) what drives the use of native seeds (vs non-natives)
- 2) whether there is a priority given to local adapted species
- 3) how recommendations from Plant Materials Specialists shape demand and if the choices available are limited by the current state of plant development or what suppliers have on hand.
- 4) Does the demand created by the CRP strengthen seed suppliers help, hinder, or is neutral with respect to meeting the needs of users outside of the CRP, such as those on public lands, for ecological restoration?

For Gordon Pearce

Please give us information about Bruce Seed Farm and the natives you produce and sell.

We would like you to share with us what goes into the cost of native seed and then, relatedly, the price.

Additional questions you might address include the following:

How do you as a supplier know what to grow?

Is there much continual communication between suppliers and buyers of different types?

How often are you left with seed you wanted to sell in a season?

Do you get feedback on the performance of seed from the users?

What are the concerns that you and other Montana growers have about the seed market?

Do you view the seed supply as robust, and what could help it be better?

We are also interested in whether demand for native seed for the CRP strengthens the ability of seed suppliers (because it is consistent and growing) to meet the needs of all the multiple uses out there—especially ones that might be outside of CRP on public lands, or for ecological restoration. We would appreciate your view around this questions, as well what you view as the main drivers of native seed use and the barriers to meeting demand.