

Wisconsin Natural Areas Preservation Council GUIDELINES

Seed Collecting on State Natural Areas

Introduction

The pressure to allow seed collecting from prairies and other natural communities on State Natural Areas stems from the relative lack of other remnant areas with local genotypes from which seed can be legally collected. This shortage may lead agencies, private landowners, natural landscapers, and nursery operators to abandon the idea of native plant community restoration or to import more readily available, less expensive, but genetically different seed.

Concern for the loss of ecosystem services and the need to protect natural areas for the prime purposes of safeguarding biodiversity and its dynamics and providing for research and teaching are reflected in the recommendations that follow. At the same time, the recommendations address the important role genetic pools in natural areas can play in increasing and sustaining Wisconsin's biodiversity.

Permitting Recommendations

Present law (NR 45.13) prohibits the collection of plants and plant parts, including seeds, from State Natural Areas without a permit. These guidelines are established to govern the issuing of permits by the Natural Heritage Conservation Program.

Endangered and threatened species are protected by an additional permitting process (Permit for Endangered and Threatened Species) and are not addressed in this document. In general, seed of such species can be collected only as part of a recovery effort.

1. Seed collecting on State Natural Areas is authorized only by permit using DNR Form 1700-039 "Seed Collecting on DNR Land".
2. Permits will be issued generally only for scientific projects requiring seeds of known origin. Genetic screens may be utilized to assess the extent of genotypic/ecotypic variations.
3. Permits may be issued for restoration projects undertaken by a government agency, educational institution, or non-governmental, non-profit organization.
4. Commercial native plant nurseries and private individuals may be permitted to harvest seeds for stock plants of known regional genetic source not otherwise available for seed and plant production purposes. These stock plants must be established in Wisconsin production beds and must be planted *only* within the plant's genotypic region.

Permit Criteria: Staff Considerations

1. Collecting will be permitted only where target species are known to be abundant.
 - a. NOTE: Consideration should be given to the relative abundance of a given species and will take into account the reproduction and average longevity of that species.
2. Never harvest more than 10-25 percent of available seed. This will depend on the species, its relative abundance, and the amount of seed normally produced by that species.



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- a. NOTE: Consideration should also be given to the average longevity of a given species and the relative importance of seeds to the species' reproductive strategy. For example, collection limits for short-lived species that do not propagate vegetatively should be much more conservative than those for long-lived, rhizomatous species.
3. Seeds from species on Wisconsin's Endangered and Threatened Species List cannot be collected without a separate Endangered and Threatened Species Permit (DNR Form 1700-001) issued by the Bureau of Natural Heritage Conservation. Requests to harvest species of special concern will be treated on a case-by-case basis.
4. After three to five (species dependent) years of collecting a given species, the permittee should collect from their restoration plantings rather than from State Natural Areas.

Permit Criteria: Instructions to Harvesters

1. In requesting a permit, the applicant must identify the objectives and rationale of the project, list the species and desired quantity of seed by State Natural Area, cite acreage to be planted, provide the name and contact information for those who will do the collecting, and describe the collection methods to be used.
2. Harvesters are to take precautions to avoid introducing seeds to an SNA, notably weed species that can be attached to clothing and footwear.
3. Harvesters should collect from as many sites as possible within a given ecoregion to disperse the impact and get better genetic representation. An exception to this general guideline is the restoration of an area adjacent to an existing remnant. In this case all seed should be collected from the adjacent remnant.
4. Harvesters must disperse the collecting effort throughout the designated area.
5. Hand harvesting and use of hand tools, e.g., shears and box combs, are acceptable harvest methods. Larger mechanical devices are prohibited unless otherwise permitted. Other tools will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
6. The permittee is required to submit a report detailing the amount of seed collected by species and a map showing where each species was collected within the natural area.
7. The permittee, except for nurseries, should consider allowing seed collecting by others on their restorations.

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