

CONSERVATION Showcase

Tribes, Pueblos Explore Native Plants

NRCS New Mexico's Plant Materials Center in Los Lunas is an incubator for native plant technology for a wide variety of farmers, ranchers, and industries – and recently had the opportunity to showcase some of its work to the Intertribal Nursery Council.

Native Americans associated with the Intertribal Nursery Council have indicated they are seeking knowledge in plant propagation for cultural, medicinal, and spiritual plants. The interests of this group range from large commercial conifer seedling production to planting beds for basket materials. And, as part of their annual meeting which was held in Albuquerque this year, they toured the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center and benefited from exposure to riparian restoration materials, grass seeding opportunities, and native plants useable for windbreaks.

“Tribes are interested in growing native plants that are on their reservations or pueblos – or plants that should be there,” said David Dreesen, NRCS agronomist. “Their visit to the Plant Materials Center is the first time we were able to present to them as a group.”

NRCS New Mexico has supported this council through demonstrations such as the Plant Materials Center tour, a presentation on riparian plant materials at their 2008 workshop in Albuquerque, and David Dreesen's co-authorship with the council's coordinator, Jeremy Pinto (and others) of a publication on the propagation of native plants for riparian restoration on the Hopi Reservation.

The Plant Materials Center also has had the opportunity to propagate Fremont cottonwood and Goddings willow that has been grown specifically for the Hopi tribe for riparian restoration on their reservation. New Mexico's own Jicarilla and Mescalero tribes, and Santo Domingo



Dave Dreesen welcomes Jeremy Pinto

and Cochiti Pueblos, have gained from the support of the Plant Materials Center. And, the Santa Ana Pueblo has developed its nursery program from a small operation to one that enhances its economy by selling native plants to the public. NRCS New Mexico has also assisted the Navajo tribe with projects including one where a giant sacaton windstrip demonstration has been installed.

The Intertribal Nursery Council was started by the U.S. Forest Service as part of its program to support state and private nursery operations – and the council is part of its special effort to help tribal nurseries. Tribes throughout the United States are growing native plants that are culturally significant. Many, particularly those in the Pacific Northwest, are growing seedlings for forestry purposes. There is also a real focus on production of materials for riparian restoration.

For more information about the native plants being developed at the Los Lunas Plant Materials Center for a variety of uses call 505-865-4684.