

Developing Native Seed Supplies for the Coastal Prairies Region of Texas

Douglas L. Jobes, Forrest S. Smith, Keith A. Pawelek, Aaron D. Tjelmeland, Garry S. Stephens, Jim Willis, and Sonia Najera

The Coastal Prairies and Marshes ecoregion of Texas is unique because of its history of large-scale agriculture production, prairie grasslands, and the current metropolitan growth. One threat to wildlife and native habitat conservation in the region is habitat loss. The lack of native plant seed sources for restoration projects limits addressing this loss.

We are collecting seed within an 18-county area. Collections are placed in the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service E. “Kika” de la Garza Plant Materials Center in Kingsville, Texas. Seed from these collections are used to evaluate native plant populations from the coastal prairies for seed source development. Field evaluations are underway at two sites that represent the region’s soil types. Species being evaluated include little bluestem, yellow Indiangrass, silver bluestem, purpletop tridens, and rattlesnake master. Top performing populations will be identified for commercial seed production. In addition, two collections of knotroot bristlegrass have entered this phase of the project after being evaluated from 2018–2020.

Providing quality seed sources for restoration and reclamation plays an important role in wildlife habitat conservation and restoration. In addition to native plant seed source development, personnel from the *Coastal Prairie Native Seed Project* are also working to provide technical guidance to landowners and managers across the region, and to educate the public on the importance of native plant restoration efforts.

Cooperative funding provided by the Texas Department of Transportation, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Henderson-Wessendorf Foundation, Chiltepin Charitable Fund, Trull Foundation, and the Willard and Ruth Johnson Charitable Foundation.