



# Rose Lake Plant Materials Program

## 2014 Spring/Summer Newsletter



Family planting sweetgrass during training event with Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians



## Rose Lake Plant Materials Center Provides Sweetgrass Propagation Training

On May 21 the staff at the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center participated in an event to train members of the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians on collection, propagation, and care of sweetgrass. The event was hosted by the Grand Traverse Band at their educational facility near Traverse City, Michigan, and was done in coordination with NRCS Tribal Contacts Jason Kimbrough and D. J. Shook. The evening event was attended by about 15 members of the Grand Traverse Band, including Elders, Tribal Educators, and family members.

The training started at a field site where an indigenous population of sweetgrass was collected. Tribal Elder Hank Bailey provided a blessing for the event before the plants were dug from the soil. The plants were taken to the educational center where the PMC staff led a discussion on collection, separation, propagation and care of sweetgrass. The tribal members separated sweetgrass plantlets and established them in a raised garden near the educational center.

A follow-up training event is planned for the fall to reinforce the training held in May and provide information on propagating sweetgrass in a greenhouse or home over winter. The event will be open to all tribal members.

The training was conducted under the authority of a Memorandum of Agreement and associated Task Agreement between the Grand Traverse Band and the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Grand Traverse Band is a federally recognized tribe located near Traverse City, MI.



Tribal Elder Hank Bailey discusses cultural significance of sweetgrass



Tribal members transplanting sweetgrass



## **Rose Lake Plant Materials Center Hosts Soil Health Workshop Presented by Michigan State University**

At 55 degrees and breezy it was definitely light jacket weather at the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center on July 15 for a soil health work shop that was presented by extension educators at Michigan State University. Extension educators Paul Gross, Christina Curell, and Marilyn Thelen provided basic information on soil health and the importance of improving soil health for agricultural production and environmental protection. They also used a rainfall simulator to demonstrate how different soil management techniques influence soil erosion and water quality.

NRCS Soil scientist Matt Bromley made a presentation to the group about soils from a soil pit point of view. PMC Agronomist John Durling provided a description of various cover crops being grown at the PMC and worked with Christina Curell to demonstrate a soil health test kit. Sergio Perez (Biological Sciences Technician), John Leif (PMC Manager), Pete Pelon (summer employee) and Tom Topham (Earth



Team Volunteer) led tour groups during concurrent sessions in the afternoon. The PMC staff made sure the Center was clean and prepared to host the training.

Fifty one people attended the workshop including 38 NRCS or Conservation District employees. Non-NRCS employees that attended included educators from Michigan State University, Michigan Association of Conservation Districts, Greater Lansing Food Bank, and other agricultural professionals. The workshop was a culmination of over two years of discussions and planning between MSU-E and NRCS.



PMC Agronomist John Durling discussing cover crops



NRCS Soil Scientist Matt Bromley discusses soil characteristics



MSU Extension Educator Christina Curell demonstrates soil test kit



MSU Extension Educator Paul Gross demonstrates a rainfall simulator



## Demonstration Planting of Prairie Grass and Wildflower Establishment

The Rose Lake Plant Materials Center was recently presented with an opportunity to use about 2 acres of aging pasture land across the road from the office to establish research or demonstration plots. After discussions with the Michigan NRCS Plant Materials Committee, State Biologist Dan Zay, and input from field staff, the PMC initiated a field planting to demonstrate different techniques for establishing prairie grasses and wildflowers in the same field. This topic was identified by several members of the Michigan Plant Materials Committee as a high priority topic for the NRCS field staff. Field Offices have had challenges over the past few years co-establishing grasses and wildflowers or introducing wildflowers into a prairie grass planting.

The demonstration takes two directions in establishing both grasses and wildflowers. The first tactic is to establish prairie grasses first followed by wildflowers. The second tactic is to establish wildflowers first followed by grasses. Using a temporary vegetative cover (oats and annual ryegrass) and mowing practices are also included. Seedbed preparation and spring planting of grasses and/or wildflowers was completed in May and early June. Plantings of grasses and wildflowers are planned for fall 2014, spring 2015, and fall 2015. The PMC staff extends a special thank you to the Michigan State University forage project for allowing us to use their plot seeding equipment.

The planting will be part of planned and anticipated training events to be held at the Rose Lake PMC over the next few years. Plant establishment data will be collected and photo documentation of the planting is in progress.



Plot area prior to site preparation



Planting wildflowers using MSU plot seeder



Six weeks after planting, mowing applied to half of plot



Six weeks after planting, temporary cover

## Plant Materials Center Agronomist John Durling Participates in Earth Day Events at State Capitol



PMC Agronomist John Durling joined MI-NRCS Public Affairs Specialist Brian Buehler to demonstrate the environmental benefits of cover crops at an Earth Day event hosted by the Michigan Department



of Environmental Quality, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

More than 2,200 attendees included students from schools as far away as Grand Rapids and Flint, as well as local students. The event was held near the Michigan capitol on April 22. The PMC exhibit demonstrated how cover crops reduce soil erosion and the different types of cover crops planted by Michigan Farmers.



PMC Agronomist John Durling presenting at Earth Day event at Michigan State Capitol, Lansing, MI



## Heartfelt Farewell from John Leif

After 11 years this will be the last newsletter that I will have a hand in creating on behalf of the Rose Lake Plant Materials Center. I have accepted a position with in private industry and my last day at the PMC is July 25. It has been a genuine pleasure working with all the people in NRCS and especially the Plant Materials Program. Everyone that I have worked with in the Program has been friendly, cooperative, and helpful. I hope you can all say the same about your interactions with us at the Rose Lake PMC.

I wish you all the best as you continue to support the mission of getting conservation on the land. The Plant Materials Program is uniquely positioned to provide technical information and training for many conservation efforts across the country. The new direction of the Program should facilitate an even more productive relationship between the PMC's and the Field Offices. Rose Lake PMC Agronomist John Durling will be handling the managerial and administrative duties while the Manager position is vacant. John can be reached at the PMC or by email at [john.durling@mi.usda.gov](mailto:john.durling@mi.usda.gov).



PMC Manager John Leif presenting information at a recent field day



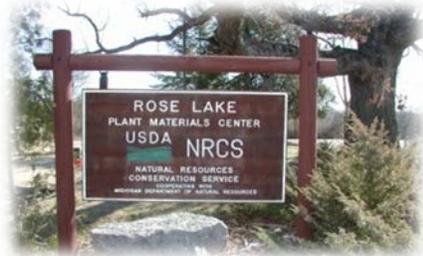
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