

Forest Service, National Forest System, Southern Region, Genetic Resource Management Program

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Genetic principles are fundamental to the USDA Forest Service's mission to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Forest Service, Southern Region encompasses 13 states and Puerto Rico and consists of 14 National Forest units and two special units. The objectives of the Forest Service, Southern Region, Genetic Resource Management Program (GRMP) are to 1) provide leadership and expertise to incorporate genetic principles into ecosystem management; 2) provide high quality, genetically diverse, and source-appropriate seed for reforestation and restoration and 3) to conserve genetic diversity of at-risk plant populations in accord with National Forest planning. The GRMP focuses primarily on the support of longleaf pine, shortleaf pine, northern red oak, and white oak reforestation. The program also supports genetics management actions for more than 20 additional forest tree species and several native plants. Program components include the active management of the Ashe Seed Extractory and Seed Bank in Brooklyn, Mississippi and 7 Genetic Resource Management Areas (GRMAs) located on National Forests in 6 states. GRMAs are special administrative areas designated for intensive tree seed production. Combined, the GRMAs encompass nearly 3,700 acres and contain 100 orchards. Additional tree seed orchards and seed production areas apart from the GRMAs are also maintained on the National Forests. Most notably the Watauga Northern Red Oak seed Orchard in northern Tennessee is the largest of its kind and is presently administered through an agreement with the University of Tennessee. To meet the objectives of the GRMP, the Forest Service is reliant on external partnerships with state, local, private, tribal, and federal organizations including CAMCORE, Global Conservation Consortium for Oak, Georgia Forestry Commission, Longleaf Alliance, NC State Tree Improvement Cooperative, Western Gulf Forest Tree Improvement Program, and others.