

Seeding the Future: Wyoming AML Native Plants Project¹

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Abstract: Wyoming is part of the vast sagebrush steppe ecosystem that at one time extended over 131 million acres. Today only about half of that acreage remains split between 11 western states. There are over 350 sagebrush obligate species that live, feed, and breed within this shrinking ecosystem. The Wyoming AML Native Plants Project (AML NP²) is a creative collaboration between federal and state entities, local governmental groups, and non-governmental organizations intent on improving wildlife habitat by re-establishing sagebrush and native plant communities at previously reclaimed mine sites through our creative educational planting projects to cooperatively developing innovative seeding technologies. This presentation will cover the breadth of our projects objectives including our educational planting project where we planted over 2,000 sagebrush seedlings in two years with the help of middle school science students, the partnership we are developing to grow sagebrush seedlings for reclamation and restoration with the Wyoming Department of Corrections at the Wyoming Honor Farm and the Institute of Applied Ecology's Sagebrush in Prison's Project, and the innovative research and design project we have constructed with The Nature Conservancy on seed pod technology. We hope that our work in seed pod technology can be adapted for many reclamation projects from AML to oil and gas and beyond. In summation, we hope to show how the Wyoming Native Plants Project is an inclusive project that is not limited to re-establishing sagebrush and native plant communities but is about thinking beyond regulation into innovation through unique partnerships and educational outreach with the intention of sharing information and technology with other states and reclamation programs.

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