

From: Connie Barlow conniebarlow52@gmail.com
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] need another friendly phone conversation re Torreya
Date: September 5, 2018 at 1:00 PM
To: Phillips, Catherine catherine_phillips@fws.gov
Cc: Donald Imm donald_imm@fws.gov, Vivian Negron-Ortiz vivian_negronortiz@fws.gov
Bcc: Zach zachstg@gmail.com



Catherine (and Donald and Vivian) -

Thank you for the prompt communication. I value this greatly.

Unless I hear from Don or Vivian otherwise, I'll assume I just go ahead later this week with my actions re:

(1) beginning to draft comments re the the ESA regulations Sept 24 deadline.

(2) communicating with the volunteer planters that (a) we have no access to seeds this fall, (b) a possibility is open for us to advocate once again in 2019 that the recovery plan be updated to included assisted migration, (c) nobody in USF&WS has yet put the brakes on U Florida doing genetic engineering of Fusarium resistance to Torreya, and (d) it might be very helpful for me to include in the regs comment I will be submitting some of their own personal statements as to why planting and tending on their private properties this endangered species is important to them (e.g., For myself, I am often in despair about what ongoing rapid climate change means for the plant world; engaging in assisted migration of this ancient glacial relict gives me something real and meaningful to do so that I don't just collapse into depression.)

(3) I will resume my interactions with the journalist (Zach St. George) such that I will not be hiding any of my scientific and management disagreements with how the ex situ seed production has been (and seemingly still is being) handled — notably, the lack of documentation from 2007 thru 2017 of annual seed production and ultimate destinations (the results of my FOIA inquiry) at the two locations in n. Georgia where it is commonly known that seed production has been prolific. I will, of course, point him to the new webpage I created ("[Historic Groves](#)") for the express purpose of slam-dunking the evidence that (a) Torreya taxifolia can indeed thrive in northward states, and (b) that while it can "naturalize" in northern locations it is securely non-invasive; yet the "seed shadow" around the parent tree(s) that we have documented means it is incapable of tracking climate change on its own.

For Torreya (and continued communication),
Connie

On Sep 5, 2018, at 11:09 AM, Phillips, Catherine <catherine_phillips@fws.gov> wrote:

Hi Connie,

I'm pretty slammed this week in terms of my schedule (and I'm in a meeting right now as I draft this). Let me see if I can respond to a few of your questions/concerns through email so that you are not left waiting.

1. Please submit your ESA comments. This process goes through the federal registrar and to HQ. We have very little to do with this in the field offices. I encourage you to submit comments pertinent to the proposed rules as this is how our policies are shaped. We rely on public comment so that our regs can be useful to the public and our partners.
2. I don't know how to respond to your second concern about what to tell planters. The Service doesn't have any "spin" and doesn't know what really happened to the seeds.
3. All of our deadline driven work is on tight timelines right now. The recovery updates for all of the species we are lead on are moving forward, as appropriate given these mandated timelines. Vivian can let you know the timeline of any potential updates for Torreya (5 year review, etc). I know she is working very diligently right now on updates for several species.
4. The Service does not have any policies in place to guide assisted migration efforts at this time, so it is unlikely that we can influence any publication chapters in our professional capacity.

Don, feel free to chime in if you have any additional or different thoughts for Connie.

Also, thanks for sharing the links. Very interesting!

Catherine

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On Wed, Sep 5, 2018 at 8:50 AM, Connie Barlow <conniebarlow52@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Donald and Catherine -

Which of you would be best for another phone conversation (I promise to keep it short)?

I need to do several things, so want to get a better sense of how things stand.

1. I need to meet the SEPT 24 DEADLINE FOR ESA REG COMMENTS. I definitely want to offer comments on the proposed regs. My sense is that the most helpful thing I could do, both for the agency and for Torreya, is to simply gather personal statements from a good number of our many volunteer planters on why they are thrilled to use their property and their time to freely help this glacial relict species (a) have a better chance of preventing extinction, and (b) benefit from northward locations in a variety of habitats and plant assemblages such that insights into best habitats for thriving (and fending off diseases) at this stage and future stages of climate change will be ongoing.
2. I need to COMMUNICATE TO THE TORREYA VOLUNTEER PLANTERS THAT WE HAVE NO SEED SOURCE THIS YEAR. Our lead volunteers do know of the horrific results of the "Torreya Symposium" in March, and I have already let those leaders know of the break-through in possibilities that I sense from having talked with the two of you. But I also need to do an annual communication with all our planters to learn (a) of any new growth or losses this past year, and (b) to let them know that there will be no seeds available this year to supplement their plantings / genetics. I am confused about what kind of "spin" I should put on that overall communication.
3. I need to FEEL CONFIDENT THAT 2019 RECOVERY UPDATE WILL HAPPEN, AND WILL REFLECT THE BEST SCIENCE (for which I can easily recruit world-renowned paleoecologists and forestry-climate experts to speak strongly in favor of poleward assisted migration, especially for endangered glacial relict plants.)
4. I need to reshape HOW I SPEAK TO THE JOURNALIST writing the book on "people moving trees north". He has ranged from Alaska, to eastern Canada, lots of time in devastated forests of California, somewhere overseas too. His last stop (as far as I know) is December to overlap with me in NE Alabama, where we can easily range out to volunteer planting sites. Plus, I assume he plans to meet with Atlanta Botanical Garden staff (he flies into Atlanta Dec 16) and also Univ FL Gainesville. If ABG is still dead-set against assisted migration and still speaks with hostility about what we do, and if Jason Smith at U FL still proclaims that Torreya will go extinct without genetic engineering and that the disease for sure is non-native and that Torreya Guardians actions operating outside the bounds of the ESA endanger Fraser Fir and Eastern Hemlock, then I'm going to have to make my case, scientifically, very clear and thus at odds with the official program. I guess I'm asking:

QUESTION: Overall, I'm asking whether either or both of you could put enough effort into re-directing the perspectives of recovery plan implementers — before mid-December — such that when the book is published next year (by Norton) the culminating chapter will not be out of sync with how citizen and official actions are actually moving forward for Torreya.

The JOURNALIST: Zach St. George. Do know that he seems to be trying to talk to all key people in each of the geographic regions where trees are being moved north or where there is an impasse in moving them north, despite their climate-caused dying, so I would expect that he will want to speak with one or both of you. The only agency person that I know he has spent time in the field with and lots of communication is Nate Stephenson, USGS in Sequoia National Park. You can see writings and news reports by going to the following url and then doing an internal find for "Zach" (1 instance) and then "Stephenson" (20 instances). Know that the first instance of "Stephenson" you will come to is a personal essay he wrote for a chapter in NPS centennial volume 2016 — and it is about the grief he experiences watching the ongoing decline of the Sierra forests he has studied for 40 years. <http://www.torreyaguardians.org/assisted-migration.html>

My phone is on, and I'll try to keep it on me the next several days. Call anytime. 850-420-8002

Collaboratively,
Connie

P.S. A really important paleoecology piece came out Aug 31 in Science that should nail the need to get Torreya moving north. Go here to see my summary and link to it: <http://www.torreyaguardians.org/assisted-migration.html#paleoecology-forestry>

