

**From:** Connie Barlow <conniebarlow52@gmail.com>

**Subject: Formal request to document Torrey seed production ex situ**

**Date:** September 16, 2019 at 10:50:54 AM PDT

**To:** Catherine Phillips <catherine\_phillips@fws.gov>, Donald Imm <donald\_imm@fws.gov>, Vivian Negrón-Ortiz <Vivian\_NegrónOrtiz@fws.gov>

**Cc:** "Chapman, Daniel" <daniel\_chapman@fws.gov>, timothy\_merritt@fws.gov

**RE: Formal request to document Torrey seed production ex situ 2018 and 2019**

TO: Southeast Region staff leads for Florida Torrey who are aware of the **2018 FOIA query** and results that indicated **lack of annual seed production documentation in ex situ plantings 2007-2017** managed by Atlanta Botanical Garden and the State Botanical Garden of Georgia

FR: Connie Barlow, founder of Torrey Guardians, who initiated the 2018 FOIA seed documentation query

I am in process of **submitting to Dept of Interior headquarters a formal PETITION TO DOWNLIST FLORIDA TORREYA from "endangered" to "threatened."** Accordingly, on Sept 9 I sent the draft petition (26 pages in pdf) to fish-and-wildlife state agencies in the two states in which the historic range of this species occurs, Florida and Georgia. Florida indicated receipt of my petition. The Georgia DNR reply was for me to send the petition to F&WS Southeast Region Timothy Merritt, head of the ESA classification office, which I did.

You can **access in pdf both the Sept 9 PETITION and my cover letter to Mr. Merritt** in the September 2019 slot of our Torrey Guardians "Reports" page here: <http://www.torreyguardians.org/comments.html>

Prior to finalizing the petition for submission to DOI headquarters in October, I would like to make the information as complete as possible. Therefore, I send this FORMAL REQUEST to you:

**REQUEST FOR SEED DOCUMENTATION: Years 2018 and 2019 in all the ex situ plantings of Florida Torrey north of Atlanta, GA.**

Description of request: As with the **FOIA Seed Production query I submitted March 2018**, I would request documentation of numbers of seeds produced in each ex situ population and their "ultimate destinations" for 2018 and 2019.

I am aware that actual harvesting of seeds will likely not take place until mid to late October 2019, to ensure that the seeds are fully ripened and thus have the best chances for further embryo development post-harvest, which is the natural process of this Jurassic-age, large-seeded genus. Nonetheless, the seed count is certainly available for the 2018 harvest and a rough estimate (in the thousands) can surely be estimated now by onsite observation.

It is important for me to learn of **"ultimate destinations" for two reasons:** (1) In past years Torrey Guardians did request donations of seeds but the response (in the negative at Smithgall Woods) led us to conclude that most seeds would go unharvested and that the local squirrels would be given the opportunity to harvest them instead. (2) Now that **Atlanta Botanical Garden has a cryogenic facility** and a technique to remove and preserve just the embryos from this otherwise recalcitrant seed, any seeds sent to cryo will henceforth be unavailable for traditional forms of planting; one cannot plant an embryo, nor portions thereof, and expect to obtain a living plant.

**Please respond to me directly, and I will post such documentation on the Torreya Guardians website** (and include the data in my October downlisting final petition).

So that other parties can access documentation of seed counts and destinations, please, at minimum **also record the results** at these two online publicly accessible locations:

1. **F&WS "Torreya taxifolia Recovery Plan Ad Hoc Report Results"** (matrix format) - <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/reports/implementation-activity-status-ore-report?documentId=600127&entityId=1191>

Note: Column 17 is where previous details have been documented; Row 7 is where Atlanta Botanical Garden mentioned 2016 ex situ at Smithgall Woods, but without seed counts; there appears to be no row where the State Botanical Garden has yet reported any documentation of its Blairsville site.

2. **Center for Plant Conservation Torreya taxifolia page** - <https://saveplants.org/national-collection/plant-search/plant-profile/?CPCNum=4295> (scroll down to "Conservation Update - Ex-Situ Collections". Note that the latest update in that section is by Elvia Ryan 8/14/2018 and includes this sentence "A total of 4000 seeds and 2000 seedlings were distributed to the 21 institutions across 8 states including Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Scotland." That would have been for 2017 (as mid August is far too early for collecting viable seeds), but it does not indicate the full seed-count; it only mentions seeds that were distributed. As well, there should be a link to the "21 institutions" so that the public can access an understanding of geographic locations of such horticultural plantings. Notice that nothing has been added to this page to document the Fall 2018 seed production and distribution. As well, the State Botanical Garden of Georgia's ex situ planting at the Blairsville site is not even listed as a contributor. It would be helpful, too, for the other participating horticultural institutions listed on that page (Bok Tower, Dawes Arboretum, and Polly Hill) to be asked to file annual reports, or to post them on their own websites and link them from this page on the Center's website.

Finally, **please file this formal request in a spot easily retrievable for an FOIA inquiry**. I dislike having to ask valuable F&WS staff to divert their attention for fulfilling an FOIA, but I am serious about **making publicly available henceforth annual seed documentation (numbers and ultimate destinations) from each of the official ex-situ plantings that are or were in any way supported by federal taxpayer funds**.

Toward this end, I made all correspondence from my **March 2018 FOIA seed production filing** available through this webpage on the Torreya Guardians website: <http://www.torreyaguardians.org/foia.html>

Thank you for your attention toward assisting in vital public documentation of ongoing recovery results.

For Torreya,  
Connie Barlow, founder of Torreya Guardians