

## *Pine Genome Initiative Newsletter*

Public funding for genomics research in coniferous tree species has lagged significantly behind most major agricultural crop and model plant species. Application of genomics techniques to conifers would serve the scientific and conservation communities and economic development in the U.S. and abroad.

**A science committee**, led by David Neale at UC-Davis, has been active since 2003 in developing a genomics research program for pine. The program has a five-year vision of funding at \$30 million/year with the goals to develop: (1) a national genomics infrastructure, and (2) a basic understanding of the complexity of the pine genome and the function of all expressed genes. Specific objectives of the first five-year program would include initiatives on genome structure, organization, and function; application of genome information to forest health problems; and development of a genetic stock center. Scientists and experts from more than 35 universities, government agencies and forest products companies have been involved in the project. Members of the Science Committee have a strong track record of receiving NSF grants as well as CSREES NRI grants over the years to further the genomics agenda represented in the Initiative.

**The progress** of the Science Committee has attracted the attention of potential sponsors of the Initiative. On April 29, 2005 a special meeting was called by the USDA Forest Service in the Washington, DC area to determine the future of the project. Organized by Sam Foster and David Neale for Ann Bartuska, Deputy Chief for Research and Development, USDA Forest Service, the participants were R&D decision makers for major universities, private

organizations and potential funding agencies. The outcome of the meeting was agreement that an implementation and policy committee be formed to help move the project forward. Nine organizations were identified that should be represented on the committee: USDA Forest Service, Institute of Forest Biotechnology, American Forest & Paper Association, National Council for Air and Stream Improvement, Forest Landowners Association (non-industrial private forest landowners), National Association of University Forestry Research Program, National Association of State Foresters, university-industry cooperatives, conservation/environmental agency, and a representative from the Science Committee. The committee has been assembled and has worked together for the past six months through conference calls and meetings. A first product of the group is the brochure ***Pine Genome Initiative: Unlocking the Secrets of the Pine Genome – the Key to Healthier Forests***. This brochure describes the Initiative in detail and will be used to promote it. The Implementation Committee envisions an Initiative that combines the resources of several federal granting agencies, through existing programs within the agencies, to significantly advance the genomics science area for pines and related conifers.

Members of the Implementation Committee have had meetings with the granting agencies (e.g., USDA Cooperative State

Research, Education, and Extension Service, National Science Foundation and Department of Energy) and targeted visits to representatives on Capitol Hill are planned to gain support for this initiative. In addition, international partners have been approached and forthcoming letters of interest are being solicited.

*We encourage your participation and support. A successful result will only be achieved if the entire community works to make this happen. Please contact the people listed below to determine how you can help make it successful.*

### **PGI Implementation Committee**

- **Robert Kellison**, Co-chair, Institute of Forest Biotechnology
- **G. Sam Foster**, Co-chair, USDA Forest Service
- **Alan Lucier**, National Council for Air and Stream Improvement
- **Alberto Goetzl**, American Forest & Paper Association
- **Steve McKeand**, University – Industry Cooperatives
- **Harry Haney**, Forest Landowners Association
- **Tom Byram**, National Association of State Foresters
- **Tim White**, National Association of University Forestry Research Programs
- **Dana Nelson**, USDA Forest Service
- **Jeff Dean**, Science Committee Liaison

- **Maud Hinchee**, ArborGen
- **Margaret Gale**, Michigan Tech
- **Hal Salwasser**, Oregon State University
- **Richard Jones**, University of Florida

**For more information** on the Pine Genome Initiative visit [www.pinegenomeinitiative.org](http://www.pinegenomeinitiative.org)

### **Contact Information**

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