**Jane Balaban, North Branch Restoration Project. Wild Things Panel on Endangered Species, March 5, 2011.**

**Describe your personal involvement/experience in the distribution of seeds/plants in general with your group.**

I volunteer with North Branch Restoration Project (www.northbranchrestoration.org); our group has been assisting the Forest Preserve District of Cook County for more than 30 years. We work to restore health to the North Branch macro-site from Foster & BrynMawr to Northbrook/county line. We help manage around a dozen individual sites in the preserves along the North Branch Chicago river. We collect & distribute seed in the form of a dozen or so mixes based on habitat (dry to wet, open prairie to woodland).

**What has been your agency’s/stewardship group’s/company’s practice in the past regarding the translocation of endangered and threatened species?  If at all, has it been extensive, involving many species, or a rare occasion?  Please give a couple of examples (but it is best not to mention the exact site because of confidentiality of listed species locations).**

We collect and distribute seed of only few Illinois listed species, perhaps a half dozen. Examples: Carex formosa (E), Sisyrinchium montanum (E). The North Branch macrosite contains over a dozen Illinois listed species.

**Have you used seed or plugs?  Where have the seed/plugs come from – distance parameters?**

In the beginning years, we experimented with planting rootlings germinated from seed, but found that to be a) highly labor intensive and b) not generally successful. Distribution of seed or seed mixes is our preferred method now. Seeds currently come primarily from North Branch sites. (The macrosite is long and linear, around 15 miles.) In early days, we collected from natural remnants; many of those sites have been destroyed and the wonderful populations no longer exist. E.g. Gentiana puberulenta and other fine species lived in a remnant down around 95th street; they are now buried under a parking lot. Because of the restoration, the genetic material of many of those destroyed remnants is represented in natural areas along the North Branch. Nowadays, the restored sites are a rich source of seed.

**What have been the criteria by which you translocated these species – habitat suitability, historical records from the site, immediate threat of species being lost at site of origin, hoping to enhance existing populations, other?**

**Carex formosa**: was not documented (therefore not listed as endangered) to occur in Illinois when we discovered it in three North Branch (and one Lake County) sites. One of the original North Branch sites is not managed; that site is now badly degraded and the species is apparently gone. Seed collected from the original population went to Chicago Botanic Garden for germination. The resulting plants went into the NBRP Wild Garden program; seed production from those plants has been included in wet-mesic open woodland mixes, and distributed to NBRP sites in those habitats. The species is doing well in restored woodland sites.

**Sisyrinchium montanum**: present in three North Branch sites. Again, seed was collected given to the Chicago Botanic Garden to germinate. The resulting plants went into the NBRP Wild Garden program and the seed production from those plant was returned to the original sites, but not included in the mixes (which go to all North Branch sites). We chose not to put that seed into sites that also had S.albidum, since we didn’t know if there was potential for hybridization. The species is no longer in the Wild Garden program. It persists at the original sites. It is endangered in Illinois because it’s at the edge of its range here, but apparently doing fine in its primary range outside of the state.

**Has your agency developed a specific policy regarding the translocation of listed species?  Has your agency developed this policy in relation to the Illinois Species Translocation Policy of 1992?   Please describe any policy you have, or connection with the Illinois policy.**We have a general seed collecting policy; it does not specifically include listed species. Our policy was not modeled specifically on the ITSP but is very similar to it. NBRP has taken a conservative approach to the use of seed collected offsite; in general the distance for collection is limited to 15 miles for prairie species, 25 miles for woodland sites.

**Do you believe there should be regional guidelines developed for translocation of listed species?**

Such guidelines would be helpful if they included known scientific information about individual species, especially information that would help insure successful establishment of new populations.

**How specific or general should these guidelines be: for individual species? groups of species by life history? by plant communities such as fens/bogs/hill prairies?, etc.  Would individual species recovery plans, such as those developed for federally listed species, be advisable/realistic, to guide translocation of state-listed species?**

The decision to develop individual species recovery plans would depends on the species. E.g. Sisyrinchium montanum is listed because it’s at the edge of its range – would it be worth the effort required to develop a full recovery plan?

**Has your agency considered climate change in your translocation activities?  If not so far, do you believe that climate change considerations should be a critical part of regional guidelines. (Thoughts on this welcome – I will also reference the other panel discussion.)**

We have not, but it seems worthwhile thinking about those species that would likely be extending their range northward.