

## **Historical Overview of the Sagebrush Seed Industry**

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In the 1960s and 1970s big sagebrush became accepted as an appropriate species for restoring wildland disturbances and for improving wildlife habitat. With continued research, improved collection, storage, and seeding techniques and equipment have been identified. In the early years, all sagebrush seed was identified as big sagebrush, but by the 1990s seed from up to 20 separate species was being seeded. Identification of sagebrush species and subspecies has improved along with our understanding of site requirements, palatability and other characteristics of each taxon. Seed testing standards have been established and site collection certification programs have been implemented. Demand for sagebrush seed has resulted in the emergence of native seed companies, a good number of which have come and gone. In the 1960s and 1970s seed sold for as little as \$0.50 per bulk pound. Sagebrush seed sales peaked from 2005 to 2007 with as much as half a million bulk pounds sold each year. Prices of \$90.00 per bulk pound were not uncommon. Unfortunately, federal and state agencies, the reclamation industry, and seed purchasing and seeding programs have not always employed the most recent seeding information. This has resulted in spotty seeding success and stand establishment, ranging from complete failures to moderate successes. These varied results have negatively influenced seed purchase and use. Sales of sagebrush seed have steadily decreased to around 100,000 bulk pounds in 2010, priced anywhere between \$25.00—\$50.00 per bulk pound.