

Forest Service Partnership with Zimbabwe Based Reforestation Group Kicks off with Pacific Northwest Tour



My Trees Trust, a Zimbabwe based organization aims to not only restore native woodlands, but also to address the issues that have led to widespread deforestation in the region. Their primary goal is to restore degraded landscapes to native forests, though in order to do that they also recognize the importance of altering their community's relationship to these places. They are working to bring alternative fuel sources to tobacco drying operations, distribute more efficient cook stoves for domestic use, and provide long term employment to community members. In order to achieve their reforestation goals, the My Trees Trust has started growing a significant number of native plants, and has sought a partnership with the US Forest Service to provide technical advice and a forum to discuss nursery technology. Representatives

from My Trees traveled to the Pacific Northwest this September for a tour of several nurseries and an opportunity to engage in discussion with Forest Service staff, nursery managers, restoration and reforestation practitioners and more.

Tour Stops Included

- Oxbow Farms: highlighting small scale nursery, native plants, partnerships and education
- Washington DNR's Webster Tree Nursery: large scale reforestation nursery
- Portland meeting with USFS technical experts, Jean-Paul Zagarola (BEF) and Richard Dickenson (Willamette Riverkeeper), and local restoration contractor Rosario Franco to discuss elements of the reforestation pipeline, Collaborative Grow agreements and large scale revegetation efforts.
- Dorena Forest Genetic Resources: USFS nursery practices, disease resistance screening, seed cleaning and storage
- Work planning and outplanting demonstrations with Deschutes National Forest and Canopyworks staff
- Bend Seed Extractory: seed cleaning and storage
- Derby Canyon Natives Nursery: small nursery operation

The folks from My Trees found the commitment to quality outplanting particularly resonant; Operations Manager Tendayi (TJ) Jeyacheya noted "outstanding from our chat in the park with Jean-Paul, Rosario and Richard was the need to bring all human resources involved in the process of restoration to understand and

appreciate the value of their work for the long term. Rosario spoke about why and how his team members care about the work they do and therefore guarantee quality out planting."

My Trees Trust seeks to restore a wide range of forest native to Zimbabwe, where the land has been significantly impacted by mining, industrial tobacco cultivation, heavy grazing and firewood harvest. This tour brought them together with professionals across the Pacific Northwest to discuss strategies for large scale restoration and the fine details of growing healthy plants at scale. BEF's Jean-Paul Zaragola said of the Portland tour stop "everyone that participated that day was fully engaged in the conversation. A general sense of inspiration to continue the important reforestation/revegetation work seemed to emanate from all parties."

The next steps in this partnership are focused on continued joint work planning that will provide a roadmap for future activities, and remote technical support building upon the knowledge sharing of the US Study tour. The USFS International Program is planning a technical mission to work with My Trees Trust in Zimbabwe in early 2023 to further assess their operations, provide technical training, and to assist My Trees Trust with incorporating best management practices into their operations. The long-term goal of the USFS Office of International Programs is to increase and strengthen community-based nurseries to enhance opportunities for watershed restoration and sustainable enterprises, thereby enhancing resilience for people, livelihoods, and nature.



USFS International Programs, Deschutes National Forest, and MyTrees Trust staff at the Deschutes National Forest Headquarters as part of a US reforestation study tour. Photo Credit: USFS Matt Horning