

INTEGRATED ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
CEDAR COUNTY, IOWA

ORDINANCE NO. 23

AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE POLICY OF ROADSIDE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT WITHIN COUNTY RIGHT OF WAYS FOR CEDAR COUNTY.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF CEDAR COUNTY:

Section 1: INTRODUCTION

The intention of the Cedar County Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Plan is to provide a long-term approach to the management of the vegetation in county-controlled right-of-way which will control erosion, reduce brush and trees in the roadside to maintain safe conditions for errant vehicles and maintain sight distance, limit herbicide use, and provide for wildlife cover and roadside beautification. It is desirable to select plant species for new seedings which will provide a diverse and self-sustaining plant community and also be resistant to the invasion of undesirable vegetation. Because of this, native grasses and forbes will be utilized in new plantings whenever practical. Native grasses and forbes, once established, develop extensive root systems and a dense above ground canopy which does not allow for the invasion of weeds. Stands of vigorously growing native grasses also offer optimal habitat conditions for nongame and game bird and mammal production while at the same time adding color and variety to what can otherwise be a monotonous roadside. Vegetation in the right-of-way will be managed through the use of chemical, mechanical, biological, and cultural control. The control method used for any given site will be determined on the basis of which species are to be controlled and which control method will give the best control of the target species with the least effect on non-target species. It must be kept in mind at all times that the primary purpose of the road system is the transportation of people and goods. Because of this, safety must be taken into consideration at all times. Although it may be desirable to have a tall stand of prairie vegetation from a wildlife or natural history perspective, it may not always be suitable when vehicular safety is taken into consideration. Other types of vegetation and management practices will be used in areas where drifting snow or visibility may be a concern.

Section 2: GOALS

GOAL #1:

Provide a diverse self-sustaining plant community in county right-of-way to protect against erosion and weed invasion.

Objectives:

1. Systematically survey the right-of-way vegetation in units of manageable size. The survey will be updated as manpower and time allow, with a goal of meeting a time schedule which will prevent the information from becoming obsolete.
2. Determine the vegetation management practice best suited to each segment of right-of-way. This must take into account such things as soil type, aspect, and snow drifting and road visibility concerns.
3. Encourage the growth of existing prairie vegetation in the right-of-way.
4. Establish native grasses and forbes in right-of-way whenever practical.
5. Provide for periodic evaluation of management practices.
6. Take further measures if necessary.
7. Mowing to maintain visibility at intersections, driveways, curves and other areas of limited sight distance may take precedence is selection of plant types and management methods.

GOAL #2

Carry out Chapter 317 of the Code of Iowa: Iowa's Noxious Weed Law.

Objectives:

1. Control weeds in the right-of-way utilizing the current state of the art. The type of control utilized on any given site will depend upon which plant species are to be controlled, what the effect will be upon desirable species, and which type of control gives the best long term control for the money. There may be instances where a short term control method will be used until a more long term method can be utilized.
 - a. Chemical Control
 1. Chemicals to be used as needed.

2. Chemicals will be used on the basis of their label constraints, specificity to the target species, and their residual effect.
- b. Mechanical Control
 1. Mowing at a height to reduce reproductive capacity of the weeds and give a competitive advantage to the more desirable grasses.
 2. Complete tillage and reseeded.
 3. Removing smaller weed patches or individual weed plants manually by county crews.
- c. Biological Control
 1. Use of animals, insects, bacteria or virus to control plant growth. Use of biological controls may be limited due to lack of consistently effective methods and cost limitations. As more effective and economical means are developed biological control methods may be more heavily relied upon in the future.
- d. Cultural Control
 1. Introduction of desirable plant species.
 2. Use of mulches.
 3. Controlled burning. Especially useful in restoration of existing prairie areas and in the control of woody species. There are several hazards associated with the use of fire and extreme caution must be used. Each site must be individually evaluated before fire is to be used.
2. Maintain necessary records and submit reports required by the Noxious Weed Law of Iowa.

GOAL #3:

Control Trees and Brush in the right of way.

1. Controlling the growth of trees and brush in the right of way is a priority for Cedar County. A lack of funding and manpower has resulted in trees and brush growing out of control in some areas of the county. Trees and brush create obstructions to visibility and potential collision hazards in the roadway. Trees and brush will be controlled as follows:

- a. Mechanical Control
 1. Cutting brush and trees manually with county crews as available.
 2. Utilizing mechanical equipment such as brush mowers to cut down smaller trees and brush patches.
 3. Chipping of downed trees brush and limbs will be accomplished as crews are available to do this work. Not all brush will be chipped and removed, some will be allowed to naturally deteriorate or be allowed to remain for wildlife cover.
 4. Priority will be given to areas where trees and brush create visual obstructions.
- b. Chemical Control
 1. Chemicals to be used as needed and will follow mechanical control to prevent regrowth.
 2. Chemicals will be used on the basis of their label constraints, specificity to the target species, and their residual effect.

GOAL #4:

Provide public relation programs on current vegetation management concepts.

Objectives:

1. Provide landowners and farm operators with information on the management techniques appropriate for the roadside adjacent to their property. Educational programs may be offered as time and personnel availability allows.
2. The roadside superintendent and County Engineer will make themselves available to answer any questions or to take comments from the general public concerning the methods used to manage the county's roadsides.
3. Share information on seeding techniques, seed sources, and management practices with other roadside management programs or other interested individuals.
4. Erect signs designating areas as roadside prairie restoration and establishment sites so as to make them more easily recognizable by the public.
5. Cooperate whenever possible with programs such as scenic highways, recreational trails, and tourism promotional efforts.

Section 3: HARVEST OF SEEDS AND PLANTS IN NATURAL GRASS PLANTINGS

The harvest of seed heads, flowers, or plants from native plantings on county right of ways by the public and adjacent landowners is prohibited. Any person found harvesting seed or plants from established native plantings shall, upon conviction, be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.00 or imprisonment of not more than 30 days in the county jail.

Grazing on native prairie areas will be allowed per the provisions of the Code of Iowa and only after consultation with the Roadside Superintendent or County Engineer. Haying of right of ways is not allowed as mowing of natural grasses will eventually destroy many species. Coordination of activities and coordination of roadside uses will be done through the Roadside Superintendent and the County Engineer.

Section 4: FLEXIBILITY OF THE PROGRAM

Because the concept of Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management is fairly new to the State of Iowa, the implementation of this program is subject to change as new techniques and control methods become accepted. The program is intentionally flexible because of the variation in roadside vegetation from one roadside to the next and even within a single unit of roadside. Management practices will vary greatly from one site to the next. However, the goal of providing a long term self-sustaining plant community is applicable to all of the controlled right-of-ways.

Section 5: REPEALER

All ordinances and resolutions, or parts thereof, in conflict herewith are hereby repealed.

Section 6: SEVERABILITY CLAUSE

If any section, provision, or part of this ordinance shall be adjudged invalid or unconstitutional, such adjudication shall not affect the validity of the ordinance as a whole or any section, provision, or part thereof not adjudged invalid or unconstitutional.

Section 7: WHEN EFFECTIVE

This ordinance shall be in effect immediately after its final passage and publication as provided by law.

Passed and approved this 14th day of December, 1995.