

WAC 173-270-040 Vegetation management program. (1) General. The purposes of vegetation management in highway rights of way are to establish and maintain stable plant communities that resist encroachment by undesirable plants, noxious weeds, and other pests; meet WSDOT operational, health, natural resources, and environmental standards; be cost effective; and protect the public investment with minimal negative impacts on the environment.

(2) Program required. WSDOT shall prepare and implement a vegetation management program for all state highways within the Puget Sound basin. WSDOT shall obtain ecology's preliminary approval of the program before WSDOT conducts a public hearing. WSDOT shall formally consult with the tribes and local governments during preparation of the proposed program. After the public hearing, WSDOT shall obtain ecology's approval before WSDOT adopts the program. The program shall be adopted by September 30, 1991. WSDOT and ecology shall review the program at least every two years beginning September 30, 1993. Either ecology or WSDOT may initiate amendment of the program. Amendments shall be prepared, approved, and adopted in accordance with the procedures of this subsection for the initial development of the vegetation management program.

(3) Contents of program.

(a) The vegetation management program shall include, but need not be limited to vegetation management policies; technical guidelines; procedures to implement policies and guidelines; and roadside management plan procedures and standards.

(b) Vegetation management policies. These policies, at a minimum, shall address:

(i) Operational, aesthetic, and environmental standards;

(ii) Integrated pest management;

(iii) Coordination between WSDOT and local governments, abutting property owners, and tribes, including public notification, option to maintain by contiguous property owner and the option to maintain by a preferred management technique of the contiguous property owner;

(iv) Recordkeeping;

(v) Training and education for vegetation management employees; and

(vi) Testing for pesticides at storage, loading, and mixing areas and, if necessary, in groundwater and nearby surface water that may be contaminated by or affected by pesticides.

(c) Technical guidelines. These guidelines, at a minimum, shall address:

(i) Integrated pest management which shall address monitoring, establishing injury levels, setting action levels, selecting treatment, and evaluating treatment.

(A) Monitoring. Monitoring guidelines shall provide for: Identification of the potential pest and/or problem and sensitive areas; and observation of the vegetation on the site, or the site itself for potential pest problems at regular intervals. The schedule and methods of monitoring shall be appropriate to minimize the severity of damage caused by the pest.

(B) Establishing injury levels. Guidelines for establishing injury levels shall provide for determination of when a pest is likely to cause significant damage and require action to prevent unacceptable damage or public safety problems. Accurate records shall be kept so adequate data is available to make decisions. A problem shall be noted before any action is taken.

(C) Setting action levels. Guidelines for setting action levels shall provide for prioritization of target species and determination of when to initiate action so that unacceptable injury levels are not reached.

(D) Selecting treatment. Selection of pest treatment strategies and tactics shall provide for safety of highway users; protect the environment and human health; and provide for the stewardship of the public investment. This shall include an effort to minimize the use of chemical controls.

(E) Evaluating treatment. After pest treatment, the site shall be inspected to determine whether the pest treatment had the desired results. Adequate time shall be provided for the pest treatment to function before it is evaluated. If the pest treatment did not have the desired results, the treatment may be modified. Desired results may be examined to determine if they were realistic and/or appropriate;

(ii) Measures to reduce the amount of pesticides used to the least possible including measures to reduce the use of any state restricted use pesticides on WSDA's list for the protection of groundwater found in WAC 16-228-164;

(iii) Criteria for the selection of pesticides that shall include, but not be limited to, target specificity, toxicity, persistence, migration characteristics, time of application and site conditions of treatment area, including slope and permeability;

(iv) Procedures for sampling and analysis for pesticide contamination in storage, loading, and mixing areas and, if appropriate, groundwater and surface water with the use of Puget Sound protocols for sediment sampling of marine sediment for EPA priority pollutants is recommended where appropriate;

(v) A spill cleanup plan;

(vi) Methods for safe transportation of pesticides;

(vii) A recordkeeping system on pesticide use, including format;

(viii) Criteria for the identification of sensitive areas;

(ix) Buffer zones to protect waters of the state, public and private supply wells and watersheds, irrigation ditches, ecology regulated areas, and sensitive areas;

(x) Pesticide storage including a requirement that pesticides shall be stored in a secure building with an impermeable floor and controlled drains;

(xi) Vegetation selection in accordance with WSDOT's design manual with emphasis given to reduced maintenance; and

(xii) Vegetation management personnel training and education.

(d) Procedures for the implementation of the policies and guidelines.

(e) Procedures and standards for the preparation and implementation of roadside management plans for specific segments of state highway to assist WSDOT field crews manage state highway rights of way according to the approved vegetation management policies and technical guidelines. WSDOT shall consult with affected tribes, local governments, and other interested parties during preparation of these procedures and standards. WSDOT shall consult with affected tribes, local governments, and other interested parties during preparation of roadside management plans. These plans, at a minimum, shall address:

(i) Goals and objectives;

(ii) Identification of sensitive areas and minimum buffer zones;

(iii) Maintenance activities;

(iv) Budget estimates; and

(v) Evaluation methods and standards.

[Statutory Authority: Chapters 90.48 and 90.70 RCW. WSR 91-11-091 (Order 91-06), § 173-270-040, filed 5/21/91, effective 6/21/91.]