

Reducing Roadside Management Costs

Issue (Who cares and why?)

Departments of transportation manage significant land resources. Their land offers both potential problems and opportunities. Roadside rights-of-way are notorious for allowing the rapid spread of invasive exotic plant species that threaten native vegetation. Rights-of-way also provide excellent opportunities for screening suburban development and beautifying the environment to enhance tourism and the quality of life in a state.

What has been done?

The University of Delaware has an ongoing collaborative research project with the Delaware Center for Horticulture and the DelDOT. Originally funded with a 2-year Urban and Community Forestry Grant, the research team has planted 34 pilot sites along Delaware roadside to study methods of establishment, species evaluation, maintenance strategies and economics. The pilot plots have provided information for a design and concept manual to be used by DelDOT for including roadside vegetation in any new or renovation road project. Now funded entirely by DelDOT, the team is beginning to implement concepts learned through the pilot studies on a larger scale throughout Delaware.

Impact

The results of this research have the potential to change the way roadsides are managed in Delaware. Acres of land that are currently mowed 6 to 10 times per year will be allowed to re-grow with native vegetation and managed with only one yearly mowing and selective herbicides. Regional trees, shrubs, perennials and grasses will be planted along Delaware roadsides to enhance the driving experience.

Primary impact area(s)

Extension

Funding sources

NUCFAC grant (USDA)

Delaware Department of Transportation grant through the Delaware Transportation Institute (DTI)

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