

Washington State Department of Transportation's PESP Strategy

Describe your Organization's Five-Year Goals Related to Pesticide Risk Reduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) use of pesticides consists of herbicide use in the management of weeds and other unwanted vegetation on the roadside. In the coming years WSDOT will continue to build on the foundation established over the past fifteen years in the development and annual refinement of area Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management (IRVM) Plans.

Goal 1: By applying the principles of IPM through IRVM plans, the use of herbicide has decreased gradually over time along with overall roadside vegetation maintenance requirements. WSDOT will continue to monitor herbicide use as the plans become more refined with each passing year and collect information on the relation between IRVM methods and herbicide use.

Goal 2: WSDOT will also continue to monitor state of the art science in relation to potential risk from any of the products and/or applications used in management of roadside vegetation and incorporate any findings into refined internal guidelines for herbicide use.

Goal 3: Another area of focus will be in the documentation of proven benefit/cost analysis for various alternative vegetation managements treatments, comparing various types of integrated methods over time, and using this information to further develop efficiency and cost effectiveness over time.

What do you envision doing (broadly) to try to resolve your major issues?

Area IRVM plans will serve as a basis for an annual process of selecting, monitoring and evaluating treatments applied along roadsides each year. Information on costs and results individual treatment types and locations will be then analyzed on a annual basis and refined based on documented success and failures. Crew training and accountability is also critical for success. The IRVM plans will help in this by providing consistent, detailed and up to date information on properly timed and location-specific treatments.

Goal 1 and Tactics

Vegetation and plant communities, when managed effectively, evolve slowly over many years. On highway roadsides there are many opportunities for interference in the process through disturbance. So success must be measured as in averages over many years. WSDOT employs in independent process to measure and document the performance of the overall highway maintenance program. The process is referred to as the Maintenance Accountability Process (MAP) and it includes four measures for the condition of roadside

vegetation throughout the state. WSDOT will use the MAP in combination with data gathered through the IRVM process itself along with rigorous training of the crews to attain and measure accomplishment of this goal.

Goal 2 and Tactics

WSDOT maintains an on-call agreement with a private toxicology firm. In 2005 this consultant completed an overall risk assessment of products and application methods used by WSDOT in its roadside management program. Findings from this study were used to develop restrictive guidelines on the selection of products and applicable precautions for personal protection and geographic buffers. Any new, valid scientific research on impacts of herbicides used by WSDOT will be evaluated by our consultant as needed and additional findings used to refine internal guidelines. EPA can help in this effort by supporting and monitoring emerging scientific research on potential herbicide impacts to human health and the environment.

Goal 3 and Tactics

WSDOT is conducting ongoing research to implement and evaluate alternative treatments in the management of roadside vegetation. A current project is looking specifically at treatments for management of vegetation along the edge of pavement. This is an area which historically accounted for over half of WSDOT's total herbicide use. Because documentation of results and cost with this or any other aspect of roadside vegetation takes a number of years to demonstrate, consistent implementation and data collection is a challenge. However, through the initial study of alternatives for management of vegetation at the pavement edge, WSDOT is developing a process and format for data collection and analysis. This process and format will be effective in evaluation of other aspects of vegetation management such as control of noxious weeds and management of unwanted trees and brush.