

ROADSIDE PRESCRIBED FIRE: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE STATE AND COUNTY LEVELS

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Abstract: Prescribed fire has become a common vegetation management tool in the field of ecological restoration. One setting where prescribed fire is still not widely used is in roadside vegetation management. The general public's level of comfort with fire is still low enough that the thought of combining fire with high speed vehicle traffic is not acceptable in many areas. However, several county road authorities in Iowa have been using fire on the roadside for years, and the Minnesota Department of Transportation is reintroducing the use of fire after a ten-year lag. This presentation will explore implementing prescribed fire programs in the transportation sector, which involves overcoming such hurdles as public and agency perceptions of necessity, cost-effectiveness, and safety. We will also discuss the mechanics of mixing fire with traffic. Perspectives will include county level programs with many years of experience in implementing roadside fire and a state level program that is just getting off the ground.