

RESTORING FIRE ON MINNESOTA ROADSIDES

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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 fire on roadsides is not acceptable in many areas. In the late 1990's the prescribed fire activity at the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT) fell victim to this sentiment. Since then, department knowledge of prescribed fire has dwindled and hundreds of acres of native plantings have succumbed to Smooth Brome. However, Mn/DOT is now reintroducing the use of fire after this ten-year lag. This presentation will explore the challenges involved with implementing prescribed fire program within a state DOT. Discussion will include some mechanics of mixing fire with traffic as well as dealing with public and agency perceptions of fire.