

## Monroe Co. Roadside Mowing-Balancing wildlife conservation and the spread of invasive plants 5/31/18

Conference call attendees:

**Stacy Rowe**, Endangered Resources Liaison for Transportation Projects, WIDNR

**Karen Kalvelage**, Environmental and Analysis Specialist (Transportation) WI DNR

**Dave Ohnstad**, Monroe County Highway Commissioner

**Megan Mickelson** Chair- Monroe County Species Working Group (MCISWG) and DNR Forester.

**Mic Armstrong**, Soil Conservation Technician, USDA, NRCS Sparta Field Office and Scribe for MISWG

**Ohnstad** set the meeting in motion by describing the 3 zones of the roadside:

- Zone 1: area adjacent to shoulder (in slope)
- Zone 2:ditch bottom
- Zone 3: back slope and remainder of easement.

Many roads in the county there is little distinction between the 3 zones

**#1** Priority is always Road Safety. Line of site, clearance distances etc.

Other priorities include water quality, ground nesting birds and other vulnerable wildlife.

These need to be balanced with the potential to increase populations of invasive species, mainly by spreading seeds.

The goal of this discussion is to develop thresholds for one or more of the roadside zones and incorporate them into the current management plan, writing Best Management Practices (BMPs) and eventually an Integrated Management Program.

Mowing is still the primary method of controlling vegetation.

Zone 1 could be considered the safety zone.

Zone 1 is less of a concern for invasive species? Likelihood of them getting knocked back more in zone 2&3

Zone 2 may only be a foot wide.

Birds potentially impacted, such as redwing black bird Best time to mow April 15<sup>th</sup> – July 15<sup>th</sup>.

We looked at the chart for suggested mowing times for invasive species and realized that the timing of mowing recommended for invasive species control did not give good options for the wildlife/ bird dates Here is the link: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/Invasives/control.html#mechanical>

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A discussion about when the invasive plants on the chart (link) have actual viable seeds in Monroe Co. This year everything is late

Dave recommended we investigate what is out there-map invasives. La Crosse County has hired **Brandon Bleuer** of South west Badger RC&D to map invasive plants on the roads sides.

Zone 1 will be probably mowed twice per year, June- Labor day.

Back slopes mid – late summer to avoid spreading weeds.

Looking at the chart between green and yellow June –July

Dave asked if there were Water Quality or other environmental issues to be concerned about.

Turtles-DNR have mapped higher concentrations- Turtle crossings NHI portal (Stacey will send us the shape file for our proposed MCISWG interactive map of Monroe Co.)

Dave- bump elevation up on mower for turtle crossing areas

Lupine: The Karner Blue High potential range being updated by DNR

Rusty patch Bumblebee-area in the Township of Adrian- Fort McCoy Oak Barrens area has a high population, and on the Township roads Hazel/Cinder Ave

Fish and Wildlife Service recommendations for Bumble bees are to remove invasive plant species

### **Summary:**

Zone 1 shoulder mow pretty much anytime, lift for turtles

Rest: July 15<sup>th</sup> –Aug 15 unless identified populations of invasives

Work on County wide inventory - Mapping- Budget proposal next month

Fine tune this yeas-ready for next year

Work with Fort-interns?

While inventorying invasives look for rare plants too- get info back to **Stacy Rowe**