

Rights-of-Way as Habitat Working Group: Creating the Business Case for Habitat

- **How do you most effectively make the business case for habitat at your organization?**
- **Who are the right decision-makers and champions within your organization?**
- **What data and information are most valuable when making the business case?**
- **What data, information, and/or resources are available to help make the business case?**
- **What additional data, information, or resources do you need to make the business case?**

Potential Habitat Benefits and Business Case Opportunities

- 1. Cost savings from changes in management practices**
 - a. Reduced mowing reduces operational costs.
 - b. Selective chemical use reduces operational costs.
 - c. Tall roadside vegetation keeps pavement warmer, increasing the life of the pavement and reducing snow drift.
- 2. Regulatory impacts**
 - a. Build and improve working relationships with regulators.
 - b. Pro-actively address future regulatory responsibilities.
 - c. Voluntary actions can help avoid future regulation (e.g., endangered species listings).
- 3. Sustainability and environmental stewardship**
 - a. Increase overall ecosystem value of managed lands.
 - b. Provide valuable habitat resources and increase biodiversity of birds, pollinators, predatory insects, etc.
 - c. Provide corridors linking habitats and favorable landscapes for pollinators, birds, and other species.
 - d. Vegetation can be managed for carbon sequestration and support climate goals.
 - e. Less frequent mowing reduces air pollution.
 - f. Incorporate habitat into Corporate Social Responsibility strategies.
- 4. Site maintenance/management solutions**
 - a. Native vegetation provides soil erosion control.
 - b. Native vegetation can improve stormwater management.
 - c. Native vegetation can support invasive species management.
 - d. Native vegetation can reduce snow drift.
- 5. Cross-functional collaboration**
 - a. Leverage other maintenance/construction activities to provide habitat conservation.
 - b. Advanced imaging technologies can improve vegetation management (including habitat assessments) and support operational and infrastructure maintenance needs.
- 6. External partnership opportunities**
 - a. Build and improve working relationships with new and existing partners.
 - b. Gain expertise from organizations that specialize in managing for habitat.
 - c. Share resources to reduce cost and increase effectiveness of habitat efforts.

7. Positive public relations

- a. Increase engagement with local community and neighboring landowners.
- b. Be a part of the solution while public concern for pollinators is high.
- c. The public prefers the look of a more natural and/or diverse vegetated landscape.

8. Safety benefits

- a. Employees spend less time mowing steep slopes, reducing chances of accident.
- b. Increased plant diversity on roadside rights-of-way increases driver alertness.
- c. Tall shrubs or grasses can reduce snow glare on road.
- d. Roadways with more vegetation relative to built structures increase drivers' frustration tolerance, thereby reducing road rage.
- e. Tall herbaceous vegetation and shrubs slow vehicles that leave the road and absorb some of their kinetic energy (i.e., "errant vehicle soft landing").
- f. Non-woody native species are generally compatible with Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) and North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) requirements.

9. Cultural/educational benefits

- a. Using local native vegetation in highly visible locations provides a sense of place, reflecting the area's natural heritage.
- b. Provide an opportunity to engage employees, partners, and others in conservation.
- c. Increase public awareness of the importance of pollinators and the role that working landscapes can provide in conservation.

10. Tourism benefits

- a. Roadside environments that provide an aesthetically pleasant travel experience increase the likelihood that tourists stop and spend money in communities along the highway (e.g. scenic byways program).
- b. Some locations may be suitable for recreational opportunities.
- c. Improve the aesthetic on adjacent lands (parks, preserves, and other natural areas).

Now it's your turn: What benefits or opportunities are missing?