

## Alternatives to Herbicides: Integrated Vegetation Management Project

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Roadside rights-of-way are important technical and ecological features of the landscape. Managers of the vegetation in those rights-of-way are increasingly focused on environmental stewardship. Managers are interested in practices that will produce and demonstrate economically sound, socially responsible, and environmentally sensitive decision making and operational practice. Environmental Management Systems have been developed over the past decade to frame and advertise organizational efforts in environmental stewardship, but, to date, these systems have been only strategic/tactical in nature. They have not directly pertained to operations and field performance.

This project assessed New York State Department of Transportation's vegetation management system and its "Alternatives to Herbicides" program and developed recommendations for the programs. The project also developed a systematic framework and research protocol for identification, evaluation and implementation of environmentally sensitive, lower maintenance, and cost effective vegetation management techniques that can be integrated into the overall vegetation management program

The project team has presented a new system for use in framing environmental stewardship activities via a set of performance standards that combine strategic, tactical and operational-level elements of vegetation management on rights-of-way. These performance standards, including 10 principles and 42 criteria, are based on some of the process- and procedure-oriented elements from Environmental Management Systems, planning elements from forestry certification systems, and a six- step operational-level model we developed for Integrated Vegetation Management. The project has put forward the standards to stimulate critique and discussion of what environmental stewardship means for rights-of-way vegetation management.

Research for this project was presented at the 8th International Symposium on Environmental Concerns in Rights-of-way Management, September 13-16, 2004, at Saratoga Springs, New York.



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