

## **DRAFT - Letter of Collaboration**

### **Resilient Right of Ways: Rural Road Vegetation Management Assessments**

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Contact: Joanne Garton (802) 249-4217; joanne.garton@vermont.gov

This letter summarizes the collaborative work to be completed by the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) located at 1 National Life Drive, Davis 2 Montpelier, VT 05620-3801 and the Town of East Montpelier located at \_\_\_\_\_, East Montpelier, VT \_\_\_\_\_. Vermont FPR and the Town of East Montpelier will inventory roadside vegetation and develop recommendations for long-term resilience of its roadside vegetation to manage stormwater runoff for surface water protection. This work will be part of the Resilient Right-of-Way Project funded by the US Forest Service.

#### **1. Issue Presented**

There are multiple challenges that prevent local adoption of Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) in roadside environments. On rural back roads, tree plantings can be improperly planned and managed, interfering with maintenance equipment and other infrastructure. Additionally, municipalities often lack the capacity to plan and care for GSI and address public safety concerns. To address these issues, we seek to build greater understanding and capacity within our communities to plan and maintain rural roadside vegetation to maximize their benefits. Municipalities managing this infrastructure need technical resources to guide their planning and management efforts, as well as support to attain accurate data, develop and implement strategic plans, enhance management skills, and secure funds.

While communities statewide will benefit, this project will focus on only 10 communities within the Lake Champlain Basin. Priority communities have high potential for stormwater sediment erosion from back roads due to steep slopes and erodible soils. These communities are also considering cost-efficient and effective solutions that maximize road safety, comply with stormwater guidelines, maintain scenic sections of canopy roads, and are sensitive to the environmental concerns of landowners in each town. This work prioritizes assessments and strategies that focus on enhancing tree cover and promoting GSI practices in roadside environments to grow resilient right-of-ways.

#### **2. Purpose**

FPR will support 10 communities in Vermont to assess their roadside vegetation, including trees, and develop strategies to guide vegetation management in their towns that supports environmental, economic and cultural values. The project will focus on two actions:

- 1) conducting a roadside vegetation assessment and writing a report to highlight the assessment results, and
- 2) supporting each town in developing an action-based management plan for its public right-of-way trees.

This is a multi-year grant project that will allow FPR assist towns in implementing best management practices to maintain roadside vegetation. Areas of collaboration may be proposed by either institution and agreed to in writing. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Providing a record of roadside vegetation based on available GIS data to inform plans and budgets;
- Assessing roadside condition including identification of priority tree canopies in East Montpelier

that support environmental or cultural goals (i.e. reduce soil erosion, protect water quality, preserve scenic vistas and cultural heritage);

- Identifying best practices, management priorities, and plan of work to maximize public benefits from safe and healthy roadside vegetation;
- Providing educational outreach materials targeted at selectboard members, the road foreman, the conservation commission, and the general public regarding best practices for both clearing and maintaining roadside vegetation;
- Scheduling a public meeting with all parties involved and the greater community to share results of the inventory;
- Collaborating to develop a management plan for the town's roadside vegetation; and
- Identifying priority training needs and communicating them with FPR and Vermont Agency of Transportation staff to inform the development of technical training workshops in the region.

### **3. *Representatives***

Joanne Garton will be the primary point of contact from FPR. The \_\_\_\_\_ will be the primary point of contact for East Montpelier.

### **4. *Deliverables***

*FPR will:*

- Meet with the East Montpelier \_\_\_\_\_ to develop a tentative schedule for the roadside vegetation assessment, management plan development, and any public meeting(s).
- Provide staff support to conduct the roadside vegetation inventory;
- Provide necessary tools for inventory, including:
  - Diameter (DBH) tapes
  - Clipboards
  - Orange safety vests
  - Tree ID guides;
- Provide an inventory summary report that includes a community profile, methodology, field observations, inventory data, charts and graphs, GIS maps, and general recommendations;
- Work with the East Montpelier \_\_\_\_\_ and other key stakeholders to develop a management plan for East Montpelier's rural roadside vegetation;
- Provide opportunities for public employees and local citizens to become trained in tree care along rural roads based on needs identified by the East Montpelier \_\_\_\_\_ and other key stakeholders.

*The Town of East Montpelier will:*

- Provide a point contact responsible for:
  - Past and current community engagement with vegetation in the right-of-way in the town;
  - Identifying key stakeholders in this effort;
  - Determining the scope and scale of the roadside vegetation inventory;
  - Decisions regarding the scope of information that will be most appropriate to collect in the inventory; and
  - Being the recipient of project deliverables.

- Provide FPR with town-specific information, including:
  - A current, large parcel map of the town;
  - Relevant aerial maps of the town to demonstrate scope of the inventory;
  - Accurate information on the extent of the public right-of-way (ROW);
  - Information on past tree or vegetation inventories;
  - Information on local engagement with public vegetation (including tree) management and stewardship.
- Utilize the communication channels of the East Montpelier \_\_\_\_\_ to notify the public of key steps in the project development and invite and manage public comment.
- Convene its Project Advisory Committee and any interested members of the public to meet with FPR staff to:
  - outline the project scope;
  - review results of the right-of-way vegetation assessment;
  - review the draft vegetation management plan; and
  - receive a final presentation on the results of the collaborative effort before the end of the collaborative period and facilitate discussion how to advance resilient roadside vegetation management in East Montpelier.

**5. Monetary Outline**

No money will be exchanged during this project.

**6. Termination Clause**

Either party may terminate this working relationship seven days after notifying the other party in writing.

**7. Effective Date and Signatures**

This scope of work shall will be effective from \_\_\_\_\_, 2017 to the end of the grant period in September 2018.

Both parties agree to the conditions as described above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation

Town of East Montpelier