

Rural Road Resilient Right-of-Ways Vegetation Assessment

Town of East Montpelier Work Plan

January 14, 2018 – DRAFT

Town priorities

Maintain healthy forests and roadside vegetation along East Montpelier's rural roads by planning for vegetation management practices appropriate to the types of right-of-way roadside communities found in the town. Through this rural roadside vegetation assessment and resulting action plan, the town will address:

- preservation of historically, culturally, or aesthetically important tree canopies
- management of roadside forests to promote healthy and long-lasting tree canopies
- preservation of important viewsheds
- road degradation in common mud season problem spots
- locations where the road is too narrow or too wide
- key roadside areas in need of planting (trees or other vegetation)
- key roadside areas in need of thinning or cutting for increased road safety or improved canopy health
- key intersections where an increase or decrease of vegetation may improve safety and/or aesthetics
- the safety and experience of those using road routes from recreation routes (pedestrians, bicyclists, equestrians)
- assess areas at higher risk from storm damage that causes trees to fall on or across the road

Assess town processes that:

- facilitate open dialogue with Washington Electric Co-op and Green Mountain Power, the main utilities companies responsible for vegetation clearing underneath power lines;
- promote relevant communication between the road foreman and East Montpelier Tree Warden;
- reduce the spread of roadside invasive species, specifically by addressing mowing practices that may facilitate movement and/or reproduction of these species.

In addition, Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation staff will facilitate exploration of a **pilot project** that outlines on-the-ground management techniques recommended for a specific road segment within the town. This may include marking of trees to be preserved or cut within the right-of-way, and/or location of potential planting locations. The pilot project will serve to highlight site-appropriate species composition for improved forest health in roadside environments. The location will be chosen at the completion of the road assessment.

Priority Roads

The road assessment will likely begin the week of September 25th and continue through the first week of October. At least three of the following six routes will be assessed during the fall of 2017.

Currently, the roadside vegetation assessment focuses on 130-foot long road plots assessed approximately every quarter mile of road. Plots register data for both the left- and right-hand side of the roads as travelled S-N and W-E. Selected plots will convey a typical representation of the roadside environment at or near that quarter-mile marker. Assessment of these 130-foot long plots every quarter mile will result in coverage of approximately 10% of the covered routes.

Route 1 – Approx. 3.5 miles

North Street from town border (S-N) – Horn of the Moon to County Road (W-E)

Route 2 – Approx. 3.5 miles

Gould Hill Road from town border (S-N) – Perkins Road (E-W) to town border – return to Sparrow Farm Road to Jacobs Road – Jacobs Road (S-N)

Route 3 – Approx. 5 miles

Haggett Road (W-E) – Sodom Pond Road (W-E) – Sibley Road (E-W) – Center Road north to Haggett Road (S-N)

Route 4 – Approx. 5 miles

Hammett Hill Road at Rte 14 (E-W) - Snow Hill Road (E-W) - Four Corners School House triangle – Vincent Flats Road (N-S) –to Quaker Road (W-E) – Kelton Road (S-N)

Route 5 – Approx. 4.5 miles

Murray Road from town border (W-E) – Bliss Road (S-N) – Center Road (W-E) – Brazier Road (N-S)

Route 6 – Approx. 4.5 miles

County Road (S-N)

Data Collection

Data collection includes the roadside community type (broad categories include forest, forest edge, street trees, wet areas, mowed, and predominantly bare. Each of these broad categories has refined community type labels (e.g. mature overstory/established understory forest, seasonally mowed, or street trees and frequently mowed ground. Collected data includes information regarding:

- the width of the roadside vegetation community;
- right-of-way slope;
- tree species composition;
- health of dominant trees;
- presence and health of historic trees;
- presence of mechanical damage;

- influence from overhead utilities;
- presence and distribution of dominant invasive species cover;
- influence of ash affecting the ROW, and
- a categorical assessment of the broader roadside community (e.g. forest, agriculture field, water, wetland, etc.).

The assessment will also flag ROW areas that feature opportunities for tree planting or thinning to improve tree canopy health.