

South Central Region, Area 4 Integrated Roadside Vegetation Management Plan

2024



**Washington State
Department of Transportation**
Maintenance and Operations Division

Introduction

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) South Central Region, Area 4 manages approximately 450 miles of roadside right-of-way throughout Walla Walla, Columbia, Garfield, Whitman, and Asotin counties. This right-of-way is part of the state highway system including US12, SR124, SR125, SR129 as well as several other state routes in the area. A map of the area is included as **Figure 1** on the following page.

The primary roadside vegetation management objectives are in relation to traffic safety and preservation of the highway infrastructure. Additionally, as a landowner WSDOT is required to control all listed noxious weeds that occur on the right-of-way by state law (RCW 17.10 and 15.15.010). It is important that WSDOT not only meet the legal requirements for weed control, but also consider the needs and concerns of adjacent landowners in this area.

With these objectives in mind, WSDOT practices an annually cycling process called Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM). Plans like this are maintained and updated annually for all areas of the state with an overall goal of establishing the most naturally self-sustaining roadsides vegetation possible. Adjustments are made year to year in each area plan based on monitoring the previous years' accomplishments and results, available budget, and prioritization of other highway maintenance activities.

This plan serves as a reference and guidance document for roadside vegetation maintenance in South Central Region Area 4 for the 2024 growing season. It identifies priority locations and prescribes treatments for accomplishing safety and weed control objectives through the use of a combination of seasonally timed control measures. Each year's actions are designed as part of a coordinated multi-year strategy to minimize roadside maintenance requirements wherever possible. This plan also accounts for specific locations where maintenance tactics are adjusted due to environmental issues, neighboring properties, local partnerships, or restoration work done through WSDOT design and construction.

The information contained in this plan document can be geographically referenced by crews in the field using iPads and the agency's Highway Activity Tracking System (HATS). Accomplishments and results are also tracked geographically through this system, providing site specific reference of historic actions and results. This development in WSDOT maintenance management will greatly improve the agency's success in properly executing planned actions, monitoring and documenting results of treatments, and in measuring cost and results over time.

WSDOT welcomes input from local public and private entities on its weed control and other vegetation management activities. Wherever appropriate the agency is looking for opportunities to plan and cooperate with others in managing the roadside. Please direct any questions, comments or suggestions to the South Central Region Area 4 Superintendent – Jerry Cava, or the State's Roadside Asset Manager – Ray Willard.

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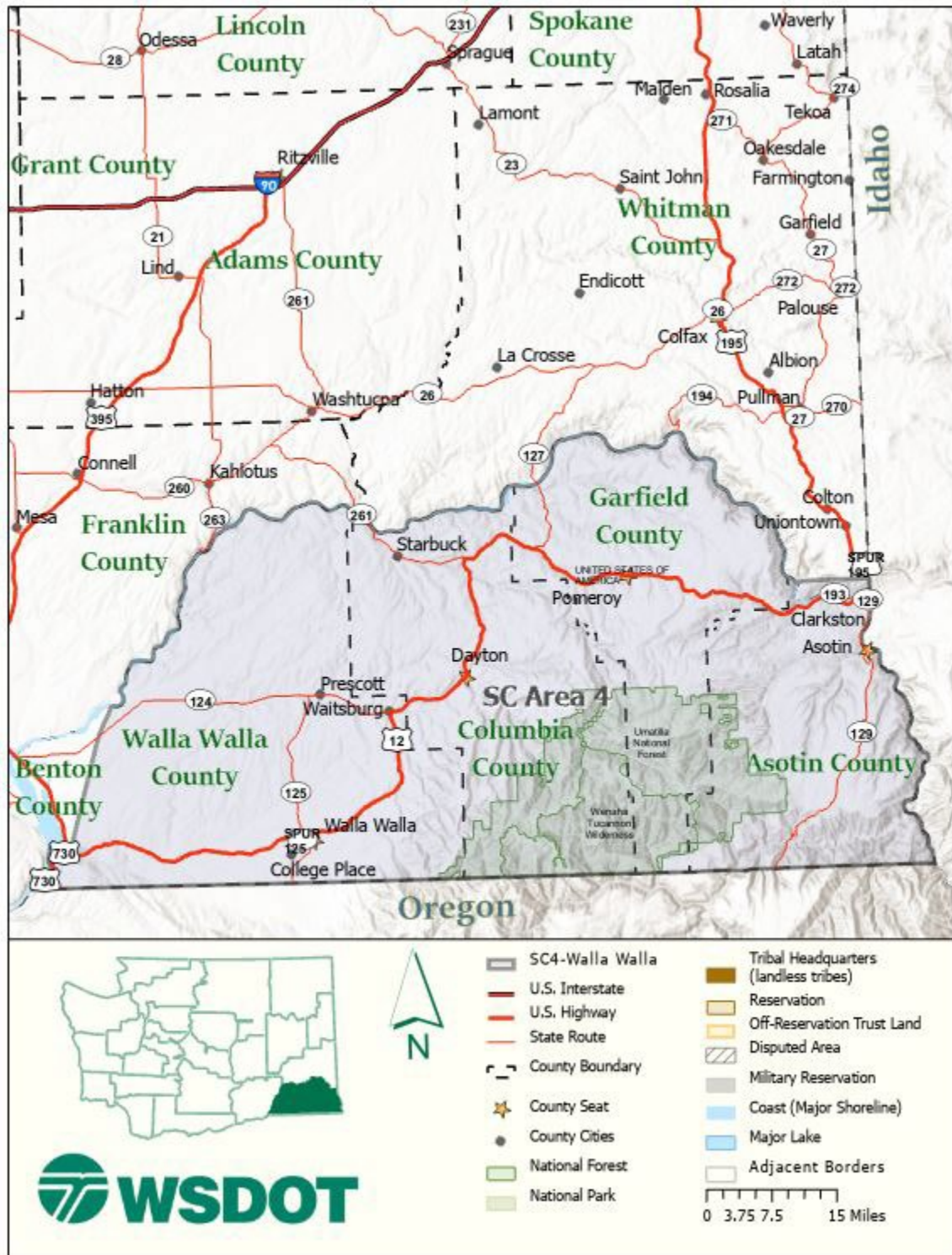


Figure 1
South Central Region, Area 4 – Vicinity Map

South Central Region, Area 4 IVM Work Plan – 2024

The section outlines the overall approach and geographic distribution of roadside vegetation management requirements throughout the maintenance area in 2024. Information is organized in relation to the four major groups defined in the WSDOT Maintenance Accountability Program (MAP) for the performance of roadside vegetation maintenance activities: **Control of Vegetative Obstructions, Noxious Weed Control, Nuisance Vegetation Control, and Landscape Maintenance**. Specific locations as noted in this work plan are also mapped in the Highway Activity Tracking System (HATS) for reference by maintenance in the field.

Safety First

Safety of our employees, the traveling public, and the environment are WSDOT's highest priorities and key to our success. Pre-Activity Safety Plans (PSAP) are developed for all activities and crews review, discuss, and sign these plans at tailgate meetings, prior to each day's work. When applying herbicides, our licensed pesticide applicators read the entire label before using products and use the products strictly in accordance with label precautionary statements and directions. WSDOT has implemented additional agency specific environmental restrictions on some products, to minimize any risk to aquatic or terrestrial ecosystems. Applicators wear protective equipment applicable to the products being used and discuss any potential environmental and/or human health risks as part of the daily PASP meeting. Technicians inspect their calibrated equipment daily to ensure it is in proper working order. Herbicides are stored in locked facilities and kept in an organized condition.

Control of Vegetative Obstructions – 3A4

The work of this group of maintenance activities relates to the safety and operational requirements of the highway. These items are considered first priority in terms of the overall roadside maintenance needs. Vegetation management objectives and measured work activities in this category fall into four groups – **Pavement Edge Maintenance/Zone 1, Safety Mowing/Zone 2, Tree and Brush Control/Zone 2 and 3, and Hazard Tree Removal/Zone 3.**

Pavement Edge Maintenance/Zone 1

Work Operation: 1615

HATS Form: Pesticide Application

HATS Map Layer: Reference lines – Roadside Features/Spray Zone 1 Reference

This work includes the application of herbicides to road shoulders where necessary throughout the area. The objective of these applications in designated locations is preserving of a band of gravel shoulder adjacent to the pavement that is free of vegetation. This treatment is necessary in the mapped locations described below to provide visibility and maintainability of roadside hardware and guideposts, allow room for vehicles to safely pull off on shoulders, facilitate stormwater drainage, and/or provide added visibility of wildlife approaching the highway.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- Apply approximately **575 acres** of herbicide treatment to road shoulders with guardrail installations throughout the area.

Locations of Planned Treatments

- Planned treatment sites are mapped in HATS layer – **Zone 1 Spray Reference**.
- Soil residual herbicide treatments will be made on all gravel shoulders throughout the area.
- Some sections through towns do not get treatment
- Treatments will also be made along cracks in barrier in the spring in the following locations:

- SR 12, MP 334 – 340

Treatment Methods

- Width of application is typically 4 ft. or less and extending to the back of roadside hardware where present.
- Spray equipment will be calibrated to deliver a 4 band of spray on a flat surface adjacent to the spray truck. For treatment around guardrail base and where wider bare ground is required, a second set of nozzles may be activated to deliver a 6 to 8 ft. band on a flat surface adjacent to the truck to widen out where necessary such as guardrail ends and pull outs.
- Actual width of treatment on shoulders will vary depending on the steepness of the slope away from pavement.
- All locations receiving a spring application will be treated with the following mixture of herbicides and adjuvants:

Blend #9

- Roundup Pro Conc. @ 51 oz/acre
- Frequency @ 8 oz/acre
- Milestone @ 7 oz/acre
- Telar @ 2 oz/acre
- Spreader 90 @ 10 oz/acre

Safety Mowing/Zone 2

Work Operation: 1625

HATS Form: Mowing Zone 2

HATS Map Layer: Reference lines – Roadside Features/Mowing Zone 2 Reference

This work includes routine mechanical cutting of all vegetation on the road shoulder in a band width immediately adjacent to pavement. Mowing is necessary in areas where taller growing grasses or other vegetation are present and must be annually or semi-annually cut back for visibility and maintenance of roadside hardware and delineators, to maintenance traffic sight distance at curves and intersections, and for improved visibility of wildlife approaching the highway. Mowing height for these operations is typically 6 to 8 inches above the ground.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- Up to **400 acres** will be mowed along the edge of the road throughout the area.

Locations of Planned Treatments

- As needed for preventing snow drift and to allow for visibility at corners and intersections.

Treatment Methods

- Sickle bar mower attached to a tractor
- Flail as needed borrowed from Colfax or Pasco
- IFPL restrictions prevent mowing through most of the summer

Tree and Brush Control/Zone 2 and 3

Work Operations: 1622, 1625, 1626

HATS Forms: Pesticide Application for spray applications, and three sub-forms under Tree/Brush Control –Trimming Mechanical, Trimming Manual, and Mowing

HATS Map Layer: None

This includes safety and traffic operations related work in Zone 2, such as periodic side-trimming or removal of brush and trees or tree branches encroaching on or overhanging traffic operations, and impacting sign visibility. Also included is work in Zone 2 and 3 when selectively controlling emergent early succession tree species – to prevent them from growing into mature hazard trees within striking distance of the road.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- Less than **15 acres** will be mechanically trimmed annually as needed throughout the area.
- Less than **1 acre** will be manually trimmed annually.

Locations of Planned Treatments

- SR 12, MP 335-337, 348-351, 354, and 360-361
- Continue to work on TOH suckers or grow-back where mature trees have been removed.
- Himalayan blackberry wherever present.

Treatment Methods

- Tractor mounted side arm with a brush cutting head, borrowed equipment every other year.
- Hand tools for TOH
- Stump treatment for any resprout on Black locust and Tree of Heaven
 - Garlon 4

Hazard Tree Removal/Zone 3

Work Operation: 1628

HATS Forms: Hazard Tree Removal – Individual Tree Removal, Stand Removal, and Cleanup Fallen Trees

HATS Map Layer: None

Trees within and adjacent to the right of way are routinely monitored by maintenance staff for potential risk to the highway and/or neighboring structures. Individual and stands of mature trees identified as a potential imminent threat will be further evaluated and removed as soon as possible where needed. This work also includes removal of trees and large limbs blown down from “non-disaster” events.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- Up to **30 trees** are typically removed throughout the area each year, mostly on the east end.
- Most of trees removed are TOH and Black Locust and cottonwood in wet areas and conifer species in forested areas on the east side.

Treatment Methods

- Crews are continuously looking for trees that exhibit structural defects and could strike the road or neighboring property if they come down. Any potential hazard trees identified will be further evaluated and removed as soon as possible if necessary.
- If trees growing outside WSDOT right of way are hazards, crews work with the neighboring property owner to negotiate removal.
- When possible, woody debris will be left to decompose on the roadside. In some cases debris may be taken to a nearby pit site and left to decompose naturally.

Noxious Weed Control – 3A2

This group of activities includes control of non-native invasive weed species as defined by state law and individual county designation. This group of activities is second priority vegetation management work after safety related objectives have been addressed. While all Class A, B, and C noxious weed species as listed in RCW 17.10 are considered potential targets for WSDOT noxious weed control, the agency is currently not funded to achieve 100% control of all noxious weeds. Therefore, the top priorities for weed control are focused on locations and species that are more limited in distribution on the right of way – where there is a chance of successful eradication. To prioritize control of species that are already widespread in the area, WSDOT works with the local county noxious weed boards and coordinators, to annually review and determine which species and locations will be specifically targeted.

To prioritize, plan, and track noxious weed control, WSDOT maps and monitors weed infestations in three categories: **Priority**, **Planned Treatment**, and **General Reference**. **Priority** locations are where Class A noxious weed species exist on the right of way, and complete eradication is required by state law. **Planned Treatment** sites are locations where

there are new, and/or limited distribution infestations of Class B and C noxious weed exist, and eradication is possible. **General Reference** sites are recorded for reference only to document the presence of noxious weed species which are more commonly occurring in the local area. General Reference points are currently turned off and not in use.

Noxious Weed Control

Work Operations: 1616, 1618, 1641, 1699

HATS Forms: Pesticide Application (for spray applications,) and three sub-forms under Noxious Weed Control General– Manual/Mechanical, Seed/Fertilize/Mulch, and Biological

HATS Map Layer: Reference Points – Roadside Features/Noxious Weed Control Priority, Noxious Weed Control Planned Treatment, and Noxious Weed Control General Reference

Operations are prescribed throughout the season to prevent the spread of any legally designated noxious weed species, and to reduce or eliminate populations wherever possible. Integrated treatment plans combine field monitoring and an integral mixture of seasonally timed control methods with proven effectiveness on designated species. Successful plans are consistently implemented over a series of years and annually adjusted as necessary based on field observations. Care must be taken in all cases to avoid damage to surrounding desirable/native vegetation.

Priority Class A Species on WSDOT Right of Way in South Central Region Area 4:

- Johnsongrass/Sorghum halepense US12 MP 341.92 Eastbound, Lat:46.314694 - Long: -117.990501
- Mediterranean sage is in the area, weed boards will let us know if it shows up on the roadside

Locations of Planned Treatments

- US12 MP 341.92 Eastbound, Lat:46.314694 - Long: -117.990501
- Reference HATS layer – **Noxious Weed Control Priority** for species location

Treatment Methods and Timing

- Currently monitoring annually for any reoccurring infestation.
- If necessary, control treatments will consist of herbicide treatment in spring when grass is between 18 and 24 inches height at the whorl. Sites are monitored throughout the summer and fall for regrowth and herbicide treatment with glyphosate only is applied if any regrowth occurs.
- Herbicide mixture:
 - Plateau @ 10ozl/acre
 - Roundup Pro @ 32ozl/acre
 - Syl-Tac @ 8ozl/acre
- Re-treatment if necessary:
 - Roundup Pro @ 64ozl/acre

Target Species on WSDOT Right of Way in South Central Region Area 4

<i>Common Name/Botanical Name</i>	<i>Treatment Notes</i>
Cereal rye	Mapping of priority treatment sites in relation neighboring concerns
Dalmatian toadflax (<i>Linaria dalmatica</i>)	Target sites mapped and treated in early spring, sites are monitored and retreated in the fall if there is any grow back. SR 12 MP 336.56 2nd Ave Eastbound off ramp
Knapweed, Russian (<i>Acroptilon repens</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols. Except for SR12 MP 314 Eastbound by Byrnes Rd. where WSU is monitoring and collecting bio agents – Do not spray
Knapweed, spotted (<i>Centaurea stoebe</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols

Kochia (<i>Kochia scoparia</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols SR 12 MP 315.45 South side of highway and RXR
Mediterranean sage (<i>Salvia aethiopsis</i>)	Target sites mapped and treated in early spring. SR 261 MP 12.4 East side of road
Perennial sowthistle (<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols
Puncturevine (<i>Tribulus terrestris</i>)	Target sites mapped and treated in early spring, additional treatments are made to any remaining plants visible when summer season weed patrols are conducted. SR 12 335.3 Landscape South side
Rush skeletonweed (<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>)	Target sites mapped and treated in early spring, additional treatments are made to any remaining plants visible when summer season weed patrols are conducted. SR 124 MP 12.35 South side of Highway, SR 12 MP 374.8 North side of Highway, MP 377.53 North side of Highway MP 388-402 SR 127 MP 0-8
Spikeweed (<i>Centromadia pungens</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols. In 2024 focus will be on follow up to mowing control done in 2016 on US12 west of town. SR 125 MP 7.4 along DOC fence SR 12 MP 322.03 South side of Highway and RXR
Tansy ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>)	Occurs sporadically in places throughout the area. All visible plants are sprayed in the spring prior to flower/seed set, any remaining plants visible in flower are hand pulled with seed heads removed, bagged, and disposed of
Thistle, Canada (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols. Target sites of reoccurring infestations are mapped, monitored annually and treated if necessary. SR 125 MP 3.6 Next to Big 5 Retail store. MP13.85 East side of twin bridges SR 12 MP 335.33 Round a Bouts, MP 370.42 North Side of Highway MP 411- 419
Thistle, Scotch (<i>Onopordum acanthium</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols SR 730 MP 4.8 South side of Historical Marker
Tree of Heaven (<i>Ailanthus altissima</i>)	Control where visible in conjunction with seasonal patrols. Target sites of reoccurring infestations are mapped, monitored annually and treated if necessary. SR 12 MP 335.9 13 th Ave
Yellow star thistle (<i>Centaurea solstitialis</i>)	Control where visible throughout the area.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- Approximately **400 acres** will be treated with herbicides for noxious weed control.
- We will mow noxious weeds as part of IVM treatments in select locations if time allows. Approximately **20 acres** per year.

Locations of Planned Treatments

- Priority treatment areas and species are identified by County Noxious Weed Boards and mapped in the HATS map layer – **Noxious Weed Control General**.
- Area IVM technicians will verify and edit weed location data in HATS as treatments are carried out through the season.

Treatment Methods and Timing

- In many cases weeds will be spot-treated with broad spectrum herbicide formulations in the spring and early summer, with a goal of preventing seed production and reducing populations when possible.

- For the priority infestation sites listed below multi-year, integrated treatment plans will be developed and implemented beginning in 2024:
 - US 12 mp 336.56, 2nd Ave Eastbound off ramp, Lat: 46.314706 Long: -117.990484, Pest: Dalmation Toadflax, Canada thistle
 - US12 mp 314 Eastbound @ Byrnes Rd. ESA area bio control needed along Walla Walla River. Lat:46.314696 Long: -117.990474, Pest: Russian Knapweed
- Herbicide mixes used:
 - Spring and Summer targets:
 - E2 @ 32-48 oz/acre
 - Spreader 90 @ 32 oz per 100 gallons water
 - Milestone @ 7 oz/acre
 - Spreader 90 @ 32 oz per 100 gallons water
 - Dicamba HD @ 32 oz/acre
 - Spreader 90 @ 32 oz per 100 gallons water
 - Species specific: *Kochia*
 - Arsenal @ 29.5 oz/acre
 - Roundup pro @ 32 oz/acre
 - Spreader 90 @ 32 oz/acre

Nuisance Vegetation Control – 3A3

Nuisance vegetation control takes place only in a select set of carefully prioritized locations throughout the state, primarily along wider rights of way and interchanges on limited access highways. These locations are delineated on maps in HATS as polygon outlines in Zone 3. Locations are prioritized to take place where there is heightened local interest in the visual appearance and condition of the roadside vegetation. Typical locations include: wider areas along limited access freeways in urban and suburban areas, freeway interchanges for local urban centers, environmentally sensitive areas, and areas where neighbors are willing to partner with WSDOT on management efforts. Because nuisance weed control activities are not related to safety or legal requirements, and are primarily undertaken to improve the visual appearance of the roadside, they are considered the last priority vegetation management needs.

For all areas designated to receive Nuisance Vegetation Control, multi-year treatment plans have been developed. The actions contained in these plans will be executed and tracked in relation to specific Zone 3 polygons for **Nuisance Vegetation Control Zone 3**, referenced on HATS maps and described below.

Nuisance Vegetation Control

Work Operations: 1611, 1612, 1641, 1699

HATS Forms: Pesticide Application (for all spray applications), and 3 sub-forms under Nuisance Veg. Control General – Manual/Mechanical, Biological, and Seed/Fertilize/Mulch

HATS Map Layer: Reference polygons – Zone 3 Nuisance Reference

Maintenance activities in each identified location are planned and tracked as multi-year treatment strategies, utilizing monitoring and the most effective combination of control methods – with a goal of establishing desirable vegetation that requires only minimal maintenance. Care must be taken in all cases to avoid damage to surrounding desirable/native vegetation. In some cases, soil enhancements may be used as well as seeding or planting of beneficial competition species. Successful plans are consistently implemented over a series of years and annually adjusted as necessary based on field observations.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- Approximately **300 acres** will be treated with herbicides for nuisance vegetation control.
- Approximately **300 acres** will be mowed as part of IVM treatments for nuisance vegetation.

Locations of Planned Treatments

- Designated wide areas west of Walla Walla on US12 Phase 6, mow in late summer, pre-emergent herbicide treatment in early fall.
- SR 124, 125 in select areas
- Non-landscaped gateway interchanges.
- Reference HATS layer – **Nuisance Vegetation Management**, polygons for the planned treatment areas will be mapped in the coming year.
- Any Environmental Mitigation sites which have completed their permit requirements...

Treatment Methods and Timing

Landscape Maintenance – 3A5

Landscape maintenance work includes all vegetation management activities that take place on roadsides within areas designated as formal urban planting areas where the intention is to enhance the appearance of freeways through urban centers. For these roadsides the goal is to maintain healthy plantings in all three zones and to control all weeds. Planted vegetation is intended to be preserved and enhanced over time through pruning, hedging, trimming, and fertilization where necessary.

Landscape

Work Operations: 1516, 1518, 1525, 1541, 1552, 1561, 1599

HATS Forms: Pesticide Application (for all spray applications), and sub-forms for all other activities

HATS Map Layer: Reference polygons – Landscape Maintenance

Landscape maintenance operations are only conducted in a limited number of locations as described below and mapped in HATS. Maintenance activities in each identified location are planned based on a multi-year treatment strategy. Treatment decision are based on monitoring and the proven most effective combination of maintenance actions, to keep plantings (and lawns if present) looking healthy and trimmed throughout the year.

Total Units of Planned Treatment

- There are approximately **28 acres** of formally landscaped roadside along SR12 through Walla Walla.
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Locations of Planned Treatments

- Reference HATS layer – **Landscape Maintenance**.

Treatment Methods and Timing

- This season we will develop irrigation maps in HATS
- Primary maintenance actions include irrigation operation and lawn maintenance throughout the summer.
- Minimal weed control is required in the well-established planting beds.
- Selective edge trimming and pruning is conducted throughout the edges of the planting beds on a 2 to 3 year cycle as needed.

Drainage and Stormwater Facilities Maintenance – 2A4

Highway drainage features which require vegetation management include ditches and culvert ends. Stormwater facilities maintenance operations that include vegetation management considerations are discussed in this section of the plan. This work is regulated

by the agreement WSDOT has established under the statewide National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit granted to the agency by the USEPA.

Drainage System and NPDES Maintenance

Work Operations: 1331, 1368, 1399

HATS Forms: Pesticide Application (for all spray applications), other forms are in Stormwater Feature Layer

HATS Map Layer: All feature types listed under Stormwater Features Layer

Periodic removal of vegetative growth is necessary in ditches and around culvert ends to allow access for routine inspection and repair. There are several vegetation management activities necessary to maintain function and operation of certain constructed stormwater management facilities such as vegetated filter strips and swales along the edge of pavement and throughout the roadside, and stormwater retention/detention ponds in the more urbanized areas. Each of these design features should include a manual which details the requirements in relation to control of vegetation and sediment buildup over time.

Locations of Planned Treatments

- All stormwater management facilities are mapped within the Stormwater Features Layer in HATS.
- All culverts are mapped in HATS, vegetation around culvert ends is maintained to be low growing and free of trees and brush.
- Vegetation management activities in stormwater management features are specified in the Highway Runoff Manual, Chapter 5, and Owner's Manual for each constructed feature (if it exists). If no Owner's Manual questions should be directed to Region Hydraulics and Landscape Architecture.
- Required work in stormwater features within the area for 2024 include:
 - None required

Treatment Methods and Timing

- Weed control within stormwater management features is carried out in concert with other weed control activities throughout the area, as described in the plan section Noxious Weed Control – 3A2 above.
- Removal of trees and brush in ditches and around culvert ends may be conducted in conjunction with other chemical and mechanical tree and brush control operations.