

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE BULLETIN #1/2008

Mowing within Highway Right-Of-Way

Summary

This Bulletin is issued to inform practitioners and department staff of the department's revised mowing activity recommended practices to be followed by highway maintenance contractors and their subcontractors for the completion of highway mowing work within the right-of-way.

In recent years, the execution of highway mowing activities has been poor when rainfall is above average and plant growth in the right-of-way is increased as a result of that rainfall. Typically, mowing is subcontracted out by highway maintenance contractors. As mowing subcontractors generally only supply a minimum amount of mowing resources, their ability to accommodate any changes from the original work plan is low.

To encourage highway mowing to be conducted in accordance with department requirements, the necessary mowing activities must be better identified up front to promote satisfactory subcontractor performance. If mowing subcontractors are better informed of expected quantities and permitted start dates, their overall performance should improve.

Key Changes

Annual highway mowing work activities should follow the recommended practices outlined below:

1. In the early spring, an annual work plan for mowing should be developed between the highway maintenance contractor and the department. This annual work plan should include:
 - a. Provisional quantities for initial cuts, including some details on initial shoulder cuts.
 - b. Provisional quantities for second full cuts and second shoulder cuts.
 - c. A provisional quantity for mowing for the purpose for weed control, if appropriate in the area.
 - d. A provisional quantity for mowing for the purpose of brush control, if appropriate in the area.
 - e. Fixed dates for the completion of first cuts, second cuts and mowing for brush control should be agreed upon in the initial work plan. Typically the "first cut" start date would be June 15th of each year (or possibly earlier if conditions required), with the exception of the Peace County and locations of higher elevation (where plant growth starts later) which would normally start on July 1st.
 - f. Priority locations and some rationalized order of work may be needed and

agreed upon. Critical locations will need to be addressed to meet the minimum expectations of the public.

- g. A consensus should be reached for the minimum height of grass before mowing will commence. Ground cover vegetation never grows at a uniform rate or to a uniform height, so an average grass height should be used to determine when the grass is sufficiently tall to cut.
2. Maintenance contract inspectors should order the work according the agreed upon work plan for the season, regardless of the weather. The maintenance contractors can then tender the mowing activities to subcontractors with a clear expectation of the mowing requirements placed upon them.
3. If additional mowing becomes necessary during the summer or fall season, there should be a discussion with the highway maintenance contractors in the affected areas. This work may be accommodated at Unit Price Schedule (UPS) rates, although it is not reasonable to expect the highway maintenance contractor to complete the mowing if time, weather and resources are not available. If completion of the additional work is not possible, the following may occur:
 - a. The contractor may negotiate “Extra Work” for the additional mowing, recognizing that the original work plan must still be met.
 - b. The department may seek outside arrangements for the completion of the additional work.
4. Mowing subcontractors will be expected to meet the annual work plan, including the previous agreed upon completion dates. These dates should not change, regardless of the weather. Dates may be amended for rare and unforeseen circumstances such as flood disaster or forest fires that can delay all roadway operations.
5. Mowing of second cuts and mowing for brush control should not be cut off arbitrarily, but rather allowed to continue past the agreed completion date so that the contractor can honour the commitments made to the subcontractors.
6. Some highway maintenance contractors manage hay permits with landowners, while others do not. In cases where the highway maintenance contractor is not managing the hay permits, there must be close co-ordination and sharing of information between the district office and highway maintenance contractor on hay permit issuance.

The new recommended practices as indicated in this Bulletin are to be implemented immediately as per the usual practice.

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References

None

Approved:

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