

Memorandum of Understanding on Vegetation Management for Powerline Rights-of-way

Entered into by:

Utility Arborist Association – Edison Electric Institute – US Dept. of Interior - National Park Service – Fish & Wildlife Service – Bureau of Land Management – US Department of Agriculture - Forest Service – US Environmental Protection Agency

In the fall of 2013 a delegation representing the UAA met with representatives of various federal land agencies to begin a process of reviewing and updating an earlier memorandum of understanding (MoU) that had expired. The earlier MoU was for the purpose of fostering more cooperative relationship between the industry and agencies, in particular, to facilitate access to powerlines for maintenance in both routine and emergency situations. It was recognized by all parties that the earlier MoU had little tangible affect. It was agreed by all that the MoU could be improved and that all parties would need to work harder to ensure its constituents (e.g., member companies, regions, ...) were better informed about the document and better prepared to implement the agreement.

The UAA signed the revised MoU on September 21, 2016.

This document is intended to

- 1) provide an easy-to-read summary of the MoU,
- 2) begin to lay out a strategy for informing and equipping utility vegetation managers,
- 3) identify ways to help inform and educate federal land agency personnel, and
- 4) establish a process for review of progress towards implementation.

Purpose of MoU

The purpose of the MoU is to facilitate cooperation and coordination among the parties regarding vegetation management within and immediately adjacent to existing and future powerline ROWs and associated facilities.

1. Facilitate implementation of cost-effective and environmentally sound vegetation management plans, procedures, and practices on federal lands;
2. Reduce adverse environmental and cultural impacts while enhancing the ability of utilities to perform vegetation management work.

Both Parties Agree To

- Comply all laws and regulations;
- Coordinate and cooperate to promote cost-efficient, proactive, environmentally appropriate, and safe management of undesirable vegetation;
- Prevent or control the spread of invasive plants;
- Recognize integrated vegetation management (IVM) as an accepted standard and best management practice;

- Adhere to the NEPA process;
- Work to enhance pollinator habitat using “pollinator-friendly” best management practices;
- Work together to accelerate development of vegetation management plans and land use authorizations;
- Promote safety;
- Facilitate prompt identification and mitigation of potential risks;
- Encourage opportunities to provide training and technical assistance to government agency staff, utility personnel, ...;

UAA, EEI and their members commit to working with the Association of State Fish and Wildlife Agencies on a separate MoU.

The Industry Commits To

- Coordination and cooperation with the various federal agencies on federal lands;
- Ensure companies with powerline ROW on federal lands provide the information necessary for review and approval;
- Ensure compliance with applicable ROW permit:
 - Give appropriate notice,
 - Include procedures for conducting emergency vegetation management work, prior approval for emergency work is not required, emergency work must be reported on or before the next business day;
- Disseminate and educate members regarding the MoU;
- Work with agencies to review the effectiveness of the MoU, and;

The Federal Land Agencies Commit To

- Coordination and cooperation with utilities that maintain lines on federal lands;
- Modify policies and procedures as necessary to facilitate utility compliance with NERC standards and other regulatory and legal requirement;
- Review and approve annual vegetation management plans submitted by the companies;
- Strive to review requests for non-emergency vegetation management work within companies desired time frame;
- Implement IVM strategies to prevent and manage nonnative species and incorporate native ecoregion specific plants where possible;
- Disseminate this MoU to federal agency field offices.

KEY FOR UAA and EEI

Identify what utilities need to do to comply and educate IOU’s, REC’s and Public Utilities

1. Annual plans that include emergency procedures;
2. Use of IVM with attention to reducing populations of incompatible species, controlling spread of invasive species, promoting pollinator habitat, reducing adverse environmental and cultural impacts;
3. Proactive attention to practices and procedures that minimize the introduction and spread of nonnative species;

4. Develop a bmp for pollinator-friendly vegetation management;
5. Develop mechanism to monitor and **document** successes and failures under this MoU.