

# Plight of the Pollinator:

Save Money, Time and Energy with IVM and Energy Rights-of-Way for Wild Pollinators



Photo Sheila Colla

## Maintaining ROW Access and Pollinator Habitat

Unfortunately, efforts to manage ROW access for energy sources often conflict with maintaining stable native plant habitats. Those native plants often provide food sources for vitally important insect and bird pollinators. Pollinating animals assist plants in reproduction by transferring pollen, allowing those plants to produce seeds, berries, nuts and other foods important to the survival of many species of wildlife, and to the production of an estimated 1/3 of the human food supply! We can and must maintain ROW lands for energy transport AND for pollinators by developing Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) methods.



Prepared by the Rights of Way Task Force of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)

Photo Rick Johnstone

## ROW Maintenance: A Mandate

Utility rights-of-way (ROW) corridors are designated land uses specifically designed for the safe and reliable transport of energy sources that fuel our modern society. Electricity, oil and natural gas are transported through conductors or pipelines to meet our energy needs. In natural areas, trees and brush can cause electrical blackouts when they grow near high voltage electrical conductors, and plant roots can break pipelines causing dangerous leaks and pollution of the surrounding environment. Vegetation can also inhibit maintenance crew access, compromising their ability to maintain safe and reliable energy transmission. For these

reasons, utility companies dispatch workers to cut, mow or apply herbicides to vegetation on their ROW lands to facilitate access and maintenance. But if these methods are not planned properly they can reduce or eliminate habitat for native pollinators, animals which provide an essential ecological service. A much better land management practice is Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM).



Photo Rick Johnstone



NAPPC

**POLLINATOR PARTNERSHIP**



Photo Kim Davis & Mike Stangeland

Visit [www.pollinator.org/brochures.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/brochures.htm) to order copies of this brochure.

## The Science of IVM

Instead of strictly adhering to one type of vegetation maintenance practice, such as routine mowing or broadcast use of herbicides, research has shown that a combination of techniques termed Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) is best for maintaining a plant community that is complementary to energy corridor needs and pollinator habitat. Under an IVM program, the most appropriate management method is chosen and applied at the proper time to control the target problem “weed” plants and encourage preferred plant communities. The natural competition between various plants and the consumption of seeds by wildlife help to decrease problem species. It is a cyclic process of continuous change that develops a healthy native plant community.

## Stable, Low Growth Native Plant Communities Save Money

Low growing native plant communities can provide safe, economical and accessible energy ROW while also lowering costs for the utility and its ratepayers. Without the need for routine cutting, the utility’s carbon footprint is lowered, along with the burning of fossil fuels by mowers and other maintenance equipment, which reduces air pollution and fuel costs. Soil disturbance, erosion and stream sedimentation are also minimized as stable, low growing plant communities are developed. ROW corridors can be managed to restore native prairie, meadow and shrub habitats that provide food and shelter for a wide variety of birds, insects and other wildlife.

## The Pollinator Connection

Today’s agriculture relies on honey bee hives that are moved around the country by beekeepers to insure adequate pollination of seasonal crops. But these domesticated honey bees are being threatened by a combination of factors termed CCD or “Colony Collapse Disorder.” Scientists are researching why entire hives of honey bees have suddenly died, leaving the pollination of our crops in jeopardy. While we rely on our scientists to solve the

honey bee crisis, we don’t have to sit idly by waiting for our crops and wildlife to disappear. Millions of acres of utility ROW habitat crisscross all types of ecosystems as they bring energy to our homes and businesses. If these ROW are managed with an IVM program, they can attract and sustain millions of native wild bees, butterflies, beetles and other animals that pollinate and can insure the reproduction of over 75% of all flowering plants.



## Management for Native Pollinators

Unlike honey bees, which live together in hives, butterflies and most wild bees live solitary lives and nest in the soil, plants or wood debris provided by a well-managed utility ROW. Prairie grass and wildflowers growing under electrical conductors or over pipelines insure safe access for the utility, while providing pollinator food and shelter. Shrubs retained along the edge of the ROW can provide food and shelter for songbirds and small mammals, while scattered dead trees can be left as snags for nesting birds, bats and other mammals. Other pollinators like beetles, flies, and lizards also benefit from a biodiverse ROW area.

Pollinating animals assist plants in reproduction by transferring pollen, allowing those plants to produce berries, nuts and other foods important to the survival of many species of wildlife, and to the production of an estimated 1/3 of the human food supply!



Photo Lew Scharpf

## We Want Your Help!

For more information about how your utility companies can adopt Integrated Vegetation Management to lower costs while providing much needed pollinator habitat, visit our websites at [www.nappc.org](http://www.nappc.org) or [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org), call 415-362-1137 or email [info@pollinator.org](mailto:info@pollinator.org).

It’s time to act for pollinators! Please join us in advocating for pollinator habitats in all managed lands, public or private. Include these management practices at home, and contact your local utilities to encourage them to incorporate these practices in all right-of-way lands.

Excellent ecoregionally-focused planting guides for gardeners and land managers are available for free download at: [www.pollinator.org/guides.htm](http://www.pollinator.org/guides.htm)



Photo Rick Johnstone

The **North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC)** is a collaborative body of over 140 organizations that work for the protection of pollinators across Mexico, Canada and the United States. The **NAPPC Rights of Way Task Force** produced this brochure for your use and information. Feedback is welcome. For more information please contact [info@pollinator.org](mailto:info@pollinator.org) or 415-362-1137 or visit [www.pollinator.org](http://www.pollinator.org).