GUARDRAILS PRESCRIPTION

OBJECTIVE: The objective of this proposal is to request permission from the Thurston County Board of Health to use an approved herbicide to control vegetation around the county’s guardrails.

This prescription will be accomplished in accordance with Thurston County’s Pest and Vegetation Management Policy, and the department’s Integrated Vegetation Management Program. Methods available for the control of undesirable vegetation include:

Mechanical: The use of equipment such as mowers, hand tools, heat and manual removal of vegetation.

Cultural: The use of shading, plant competition, seeding, fertilizing, mulches, and weed barriers.

Biological: The introduction of insects, disease, or animals that will help reduce or control the target vegetation.

Chemical: The use of herbicides to control vegetation in accordance with an integrated approach.

DESCRIPTION: A guardrail (longitudinal barrier) is a semi-rigid shoulder barrier designed to separate the driving surface from a potential hazard. The guardrail is constructed of a steel beam supported by wood posts.

There are approximately 12 miles of guardrails along Thurston County roadways. Guardrails are along the most heavily traveled roads in the County, such as Martin Way, Old Highway 99, and Littlerock Road. The area adjacent to the guardrail needs to be kept clear of vegetation in order to allow clear visibility of the barrier.

Currently the county uses manual labor with power brush and grass cutters which is inadequate due to:

1. It’s time consuming and labor intensive.
2. It’s dangerous because of operator exposure working between traffic and the barriers.
3. Mechanical methods, such as tractor mowers, are not feasible because of their size and the inability to maneuver the mowing head around and under the guardrails.
4. Mowing only gives temporary control, therefore repeated mowing is necessary. Some guardrails may only get cut once every one or two years due to time constraints.

In summary, there needs to be additional tools available to the Roads & Transportation Services
Division to control vegetation around barriers. The integrated plan includes an herbicide treatment for initial control followed by planting low growing grasses. We seek approval for the use of pre-approved herbicides as part of the integrated approach to the management of vegetation around guardrails.

**PLAN:** The integrated vegetation management plan for guardrails consists of two steps:

1. An herbicide application to control existing vegetation; and
2. Reseeding of low growing grasses.

Control of existing vegetation will be accomplished by utilizing chemical and mechanical methods. Vegetation blocking visibility of the guardrail will be cut and the regrowth treated with an herbicide. Vegetation not blocking visibility would only be treated with an herbicide.

The recommended herbicide is **Round Up** and its aquatic formulation **Rodeo**. **Round Up** and **Rodeo** are non-selective herbicides that control both grasses and broad leaf plants. **Rodeo** will be used on guardrails in Thurston County adjacent to streams, rivers or wetland areas.

Spot applications that treat the target plants will occur in the early spring providing control for most of the growing season.

Herbicide applications will be in strict compliance with the Thurston County Pest & Vegetation Management Policy and the Roads & Transportation Services Integrated Vegetation Management Plan. Public notification will be provided to nearby residents and to the citizens of Thurston County.

After the herbicide application, low growing grasses will be planted under the guardrails. The grasses will help reduce or eliminate repeated control efforts of undesirable vegetation. Another important benefit of using this grass mixture is to increase biofiltration of stormwater runoff along the County's roadways.

**MONITORING:** The long term success of this program will be determined by a continual monitoring program. The monitoring program will enable us to determine the effectiveness of the control methods and enable us to make adjustments to the strategies (i.e. different seed mixes).