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Department of Transportation

WILDFLOWER PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

To develop and implement integrated vegetation management practices on roadsides and other transportation right of way, including reduced mowing, for the benefit of pollinators, while developing and maintaining safe, cost effective and efficient transportation corridors and systems. To establish the responsibilities of the Florida Department of Transportation's (Department) Central and District office staffs for the Wildflower Program.

AUTHORITY:

Sections 20.23(3)(a) and 334.048(3), Florida Statutes (F.S.)

REFERENCES:

- Article II, Section 7(a) Constitution of the State of Florida, Natural Resources and Scenic Beauty
- House Resolution No. 1377, May 29, 1985, declaring that "...increased awareness of the value and beauty of the state's roadways will enable more people to share in their enjoyment of the state..." and "...that the roadways of Florida be hereafter known as 'Paths of Sunshine' in recognition of their significance to the state."
- Highway Beautification Policy, 000-650-011
- Florida Transportation Plan
- Title 23, Chapter 1, Part 752, U.S. Code, Landscape and Roadside Development
- Title 23, Chapter 3, Section 319, U.S. Code, Landscaping and Scenic Enhancement
- Title 23, Chapter 3, Section 329, U.S. Code, Eligibility for control of noxious weeds and aquatic noxious weeds and establishment of native species

SCOPE:

This procedure applies to the Office of Maintenance (OOM), the State Transportation Landscape Architect (STLA), District Maintenance Engineers (DME), District Wildflower Coordinators (DWC), District and Central Public Information Offices (PIO), and District Secretaries.

BACKGROUND:

For nearly 50 years, the Department has sustained the State's oldest and most visible wildflower program. In 1999 with support from the Department, the Florida Legislature authorized the production and sale of the Florida Wildflower License Plate. Thereafter, the Florida Wildflower

Foundation was established. Using proceeds from the sale of the plate, the Florida Wildflower Foundation has become a supporting partner with the Department.

1. DEFINITIONS

1.1 Wildflower: A native or other desirable plant with conspicuous flowers. For the purpose of this procedure the definition does not include trees and other woody plants.

1.2 Florida Native Wildflower: As defined by the Florida Wildflower Foundation, http://www.flawildflowers.org/resources/pdfs/pdf10/wildflower_definition.pdf.

1.3 Wildflower Areas (WA): Those areas within the right of way consisting of naturally occurring, restored, or planted native flora; some showy, some not so showy. Some will require no exceptional care other than carefully timed site and species specific mowing practices. These areas may also be locations where there is a desire or opportunity to manage naturalized species, or a desire to establish or restore native wildflower meadows by sowing seed. Due to the nature of wild species and constantly changing environmental conditions, showiness and diversity of species will be variable.

2. PROGRAM COORDINATION

2.1 The Wildflower Program is an integral part of the Highway Beautification Program. The STLA and the OOM are responsible for the Wildflower Program. DWCs assigned by the DME will be responsible for roadside wildflower management activities, which may include planting and other duties assigned by the DME. The DWC shall have knowledge of Florida native plants and plant communities and appropriate roadside management practices.

2.2 OOM and STLA will coordinate the activities of the DWCs. OOM will update the Department's **Guide to Roadside Vegetation Management** as needed to implement this procedure.

2.3 STLA will fulfill statewide intergovernmental and interagency responsibilities, as well as coordination with statewide nongovernmental organizations including the Florida Wildflower Foundation.

2.4 State Vegetation Management Specialist/Horticulturist (SVMS) will assist with District and Central Office Wildflower Program activities.

3. MANAGEMENT OF WILDFLOWER AREAS

3.1 Throughout the state, managing naturally occurring roadside wildflowers areas is the Department's preferred means of increasing the abundance of wildflowers. Guidance for establishment and management of Wildflower Areas can be found in the Department's **Guide for Roadside Wildflower Management**, available as a supplement to **A Guide for Roadside Vegetation Management**.

3.2 Determining the start and end points and shape of a wildflower area will be the responsibility of the DWC and the DME. Wildflower area locations will be documented in the District Vegetation Management Plan (Management Plan).

3.3 OOM and SVMS will make sure this procedure remains compatible with the Maintenance Rating Program.

3.4 STLA will place information and a link to [Florida Wildflower Foundation](#) on the Department's website and provide other guidance and information for the public. The DME and DWC will be responsible for review and response to written requests from local agencies that are accompanied by a resolution similar to the model resolution found on the Florida Wildflower Foundation website.

3.5 STLA with OOM, DWCs, and SVMS will develop guidance for planning and implementing best management practices to facilitate natural regeneration of planted wildflowers and management and care of WAs. DWC and DME will include WAs in the Management Plan and appropriate maintenance contractor documents. WAs will be managed to accommodate safety and operational requirements as the integrity of the transportation facility is paramount. WAs will be managed to control woody and weedy species that make a WA appear to be unkempt. Desirable outcomes include increasing the extent, species diversity, and showiness of native plants and wildflowers. For the purposes of this procedure, some desirable nonnative wildflower species, as determined by the DWC, that have become naturalized along roadsides may be treated as a Florida native wildflower.

3.6 The DWC in coordination with the DME will ensure that mowing frequencies for identified wildflower areas are included in the Management Plan and appropriate maintenance contractor documents. In addition, these documents will reflect that herbicide application within 100 feet of any identified WA shall be coordinated with the DWC.

4. PURCHASING AND PLANTING WILDFLOWER SEEDS

4.1 OOM and SVMS will develop statewide best practices for wildflower seed purchase, selection of experienced contractors, planting, and management, with emphasis and preference for seeds of available Florida ecotypes of native wildflowers.

4.2 Annually, the DWC, with input from SVMS available upon request, will prepare or update District Wildflower Planting Plan (Wildflower Plan) a written or graphic Wildflower Plan describing locations to be planted and identifying species, quantities of seed, schedule, methods, and equipment needed to fulfill the Wildflower Plan.

4.3 OOM will develop and implement an annual schedule to coordinate with DWCs to purchase seed used to supplement and support each District's Wildflower Plan. All seed shall be purchased by scientific (Latin) name.

4.4 OOM will coordinate with the seed production industry to increase the value, quality, and availability of Florida ecotypes of native wildflowers, including but not limited to Florida ecotypes of Goldenmane Tickseed (*Coreopsis basalis*) and Multi-Colored Annual Phlox (*Phlox drummondii*).

4.5 DWC will coordinate with Maintenance Yards' and Operations Centers' Wildflower Plan, and where necessary to supplement or replace displaced wildflowers, and to respond to requests from local agencies.

4.6 Landscape and roadside management may be approved as part of construction costs for a Federal aid highway project. When Federal-aid highway funds are used for a landscape project, at least one quarter of one percent of funds expended for such projects must be used to plant native wildflower or grass seeds or seedlings or both , **23 USC §319**. This requirement may be waived under appropriate circumstances.

5. EVALUATION AND DOCUMENTATION

5.1 STLA will be responsible for tracking expenditures.

5.2 STLA will develop and recommend to OOM a simple and effective method for DWCs to document the location and condition of WAs.

5.3 The STLA and SVMS will, upon request from DWC, review and provide comments on all draft Management Plans and Wildflower Plans.

6. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION

6.1 Public comments and questions about the planting, establishment, and management of WAs should be directed to the DWCs or STLA.

6.2 OOM and STLA will maintain a Department Wildflower Program web page, www.fdot.gov/maintenance/wildflowersinfo.shtm and other informative materials. The webpage will include a directory of DWCs. To the extent allowed by law, production and distribution of seed packets, posters, brochures, and other means of public information about wildflowers may be used.

6.3 DME or District PIO may assign staff to photograph WAs. Digital copies of photographs should be made available to STLA and Central PIO and may be posted on Department websites.

6.4 To supplement the Departments knowledge of and expertise with Florida native wildflowers, OOM, STLA, and DWCs are encouraged to reach out to organizations with interest and expertise in wildflowers, including the Florida Wildflower Foundation, Florida Wildflower Cooperative, Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Florida Association of Native Nurseries, and Florida Native Plant Society.

7. ELLA P. WOOD PATHS OF SUNSHINE AWARD

7.1 The Ella P. Wood Paths of Sunshine Awards Program was launched in 1985 by the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs, Inc. (FFGC). The FFGC award program recognizes Department units of personnel, local governments, and private contractors responsible for planting and/or management of roadside wildflowers and/or native plants on the State Highway System. Competition rules are available from the FFGC at www.ffgc.org.

7.2 Nominations submitted by FFGC to STLA, and any other nominations submitted by Department work units, will be forwarded to the appropriate District Secretary. The District Secretary will select any number of the nominated areas within the District that represent the most outstanding displays of wildflowers and/or native plants on District roadsides. As instructed by the District Secretary, the nominated work unit shall prepare documentation for the selected sections of highway managed by unit employees. For the purposes of this procedure, Department work units include asset maintenance contractors. The District PIO should be available to assist with the preparation of documentation. Documentation for sections of highway managed by private contractors or local governments are not to be prepared by the District.

7.3 The District shall send documentation directly to the FFGC in accordance with the competition rules.

7.4 When STLA is notified that finalists include Department employees, STLA will notify Department finalists, PIO, and appropriate District Secretary, DWC, and District PIO about the date, time, and location of the award ceremony.

7.5 At least one representative from each finalist work unit should attend the FFGC award ceremony.

7.6 OOM or STLA should represent the Central Office at the FFGC Awards Ceremony. Ceremony attendees shall comply with the [Disbursement Handbook for Employees and Managers](#), Events (Banquets and Other Social Activities).

7.7 Documentation for each of the winners' entries will be maintained by the STLA.

7.8 Awards received by the Department will be temporarily displayed at the annual FFGC Awards Ceremony, and subsequently displayed in the District or State Headquarters.

8. TRAINING

No training is required.

9. FORMS

None