Florida Department of Transportation
Wildflower Program

Office of Maintenance
Jon Heller
MRP and Roadside Manager
• Maintenance Rating Program
• Wildflower Program
• Roadside Vegetation Management
• Research Projects
• 1915 State Road Department
• 1969 Department of Transportation
• The Department is a Decentralized Agency with Seven Districts, Two Enterprises (Turnpike and Rail), and a Central Office
• 6,504 Employees
• 1,946 Maintenance Employees
La Florida! – Land of Flowers

-- Juan Ponce de Leon, April 1513
La Florida! – Land of Flowers

-- Juan Ponce de Leon, April 1513

“No other part of our country can show so great a variety of its wild flowers...”

-- Mary Francis Baker, 1926
FDOT Wildflower Program – 1963
FDOT Wildflower Program – 1963

Supported by
• State of Florida Constitution, Article II, Section 7(a)
• Florida Statutes, Section 334.044(5) and (26)
• 2060 Florida Transportation Plan
State-Maintained Roadsides

- 12,100+ miles on State Hwy. System
- 64,000 A (est.) turfgrass (national average)
State-Maintained Roadsides

~3000-4000 A
Wildflowers
State-Maintained Roadsides

Naturally-occurring, and ...
State-Maintained Roadsides

Native plant community remnants
Establishment by Seed

- 1963 to early 2000s – wildflower areas established solely with seed from national wildflower seed producers
2004 – Wildflower Program Procedure

Approved:

Effective: March 18, 2004
Office: Environmental Management
Topic No.: 650-030-001-g

José Abreu, P.E.
Secretary

WILDFLOWER PROGRAM

PURPOSE:
To protect, establish, and manage roadside wildflowers, and for the conservation and protection of Florida’s natural resources and scenic beauty. To improve roadside safety. To maximize the economic, ecologic, and aesthetic benefits from the State’s investment in the roadside wildflower program. To establish the responsibilities of Central and District office staff.
Wildflower Coordinator In Each District
Since “2003ish” – use of Florida ecotype wildflower seed encouraged
Generally, wildflowers derived from wild populations from the ecoregion of the planted wildflower area will be more sustainable than plants derived from distant populations.
Rudbeckia hirta  BLACK-EYED SUSAN
Wildflower Management Program Procedure

**WILDFLOWER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE:**

To increase the visibility and enjoyment of roadside wildflowers and scenic beauty. To effectively manage a diverse mix of roadside native flora and plant communities, and to support naturally occurring and planted wildflowers. To maximize the economic, ecologic, and aesthetic benefits from the State's investment in the roadside wildflower management program. To establish the responsibilities of the Florida Department of Transportation’s (Department) Central and District office staffs.
Wildflower Program Procedure

**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.

**Effective:** November 16, 2016
Review: August 15, 2016
Office: Production Support
Topic No.: 650-030-001-i
Reduced Mowing
If FDOT Mowing Reduced 10%

COST ($ MIL)

Normal Mow    Mowing Reduced 10%

Saves over $1,265,000

Mow = Large Machine + Slope

Florida Department of Transportation
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Native Plant Community
Mowing       Wildflowers
(*in appropriate sites*)
Reduced Mowing Pilot Study

I-10, Madison County, Florida

Jefferson County border

Normal mowing, rural I-10, District 2: 6-7X/yr in clear zone + full ROW in fall
Reduced Mowing Pilot Study

Reduced mowing regime

Normal mowing regime

March 18, 2011
SAFETY EFFECTS OF REDUCED MOWING
February 2019

Acknowledgments

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Executive Summary

Reduced mowing, through less frequent mowing and/or the area mowed, occurs in and beyond the clear zone. To determine if there are any impacts to safety of motorists or those managing roadside vegetation, an exhaustive search of the literature was conducted as well as an examination of crash reports on state roads from 2011 to 2018, the period of greatest reduced mowing activity in Florida.
**Pollinators**

**FDOT-Sponsored Research**
- Evaluating the Importance of Roadside Habitat for Native Insect Pollinators
- Survey of Key Monarch Habitat Areas Along Roadways in Central and North Fla.
Pollinator Habitat Demo

- **IVM Partners** (ivmpartners.org)
  - Rick Johnstone, Robin Haggie
- **FDOT**
  - John Nettles/Larry Porter – District 2
  - Jeff Norcini – Central Office
- **Volunteer**
  - Rick Owen
    (Insect Survey 2017)
Pollinator Habitat Demo

US 41, Hamilton Co.

US 41, Columbia Co.

SR 121, Union Co.
Pollinator Habitat Demo

ROW Beyond Backslope
Pollinator Habitat Demo

- **Mow**
- **Selective removal woodies/invasives**
- **Pollinator Habitat**
Pollinator Habitat Demo SITE 3

April 6, 2016

October 18, 2017

October 13, 2016

October 19, 2018
February 8, 2019

Subject: Letter of Commitment to CCAA Task Force

In consideration of joining the CCAA Task Force, FDOT intends to provide both a monetary contribution and use of multi-disciplinary technical resource staff as follows:

- FDOT commits to make a financial contribution in the amount of $5,000.00 for the implementation of Phase 2 and Phase 3 activities.
- FDOT commits to providing a minimum of 2 liaisons to participate in coordination meetings,
- FDOT commits to having a multi-disciplinary resource team (comprised of planning, environmental, design, maintenance, and legal staff) to assist the liaisons in providing Florida-specific expertise,
  - The resource team has expertise in biology, landscape architecture, the Florida Wildflower Program, vegetation management and decades of experience in environmental transportation issues and roadside maintenance expertise.
- FDOT commits to participate in the CCAA Advisory and Transportation Sector Teams. FDOT further agrees to consider future participation on other technical committees.
So What?
Wildflowers Are Assets

- Creates pleasant and engaging traveling experience
- Safest, most efficient way to provide roadside color
- No landscape is more visible or visited than state highway roadsides – enjoyed by millions of residents and visitors every day
- Provides ecosystem services
Florida’s only consistent source of funding for Florida’s native wildflowers

...proceeds must be used to establish native Florida Wildflower research programs, wildflower education programs, and wildflower grant programs to municipal, county, and community based groups in this state.
Recognize historical, environmental and cultural significance of Florida wildflowers

Pledge to conserve roadside wildflowers through management practices such as reduced mowing

For more info: https://flawildflowers.org/protect
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Wildflower Program

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Florida Department of Transportation