

Five Year Vegetation Management Plan
City of Leominster, MA
2017-2022



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Goals and Objectives

The purpose of the Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) is to establish guidelines for the City of Leominster to control vegetation along municipal Rights-of-Ways (ROW) in accordance with the Department of Agricultural Resources' Rights-of-Way Management Regulations 333 CMR 11.00. The City of Leominster intends for this VMP to provide unobstructed and safe ROWs while minimizing impacts of herbicide use throughout the City. Vegetation maintenance is necessary along public ROWs, bikepaths, and trails to control unwanted vegetation that may pose a public nuisance, result in safety hazards, or cause damage to structures and infrastructure. The goal of the program is to control undesirable vegetation while maximizing environmental protection and minimizing herbicide use. Only herbicides listed on the current ROW Sensitive Areas Materials List will be used. The VMP's success will be based upon periodic monitoring and inspection which is expected to result in:

- Protection of the public and environment
- Protection of sensitive areas
- Control of target vegetation
- Reduction in frequency and volume of chemical application
- Ensure vegetation management activities are conducted in a safe, effective, and regulatory compliant manner

Overall, this VMP will serve as technical guidance for individuals involved in ROW vegetation management and as an accessible source of information for residents and public officials.

Identification of Target Vegetation

This plan will group target vegetation into the four categories as follows:

Hazard vegetation – Poses a risk to public safety and represents vegetation that impedes movement along public ways. Hazard vegetation may obscure sightlines, traffic signs and vehicular movement. Additionally, it may create windfall hazards or cause excessive winter shading (causing ice/reduced melting). Hazard vegetation may include, but is not limited to trees, tree limbs, and shrubs.

Nuisance vegetation – Generally included poisonous and noxious plant species that could cause problems to the general public, City employees, and private contractors. Nuisance vegetation poses a risk to safety and health often due to dermal contact with plants that are poisonous, thorny, or densely colonized. Target vegetation in this category is primarily Poison Ivy, but other nuisance vegetation within 10 feet of the edge of pavement will also be targeted.

Detrimental vegetation – Includes grasses and woody plants that are destructive and may compromise the function of infrastructure by growing in cracks along the roadway, sidewalks, pavement/bridge joints, medians/traffic islands, storm water conveyances, trails, and bike paths.

Invasive species – Colonize a space and virtually eliminate the biodiversity of an area. This can result in changes in wildlife due to habitat change, impede natural hydrologic function, and cause an overall change in the natural functions of an area. Any vegetation listed on the MA DAR *Massachusetts Prohibited Plant List* shall be included in this category.

Vegetation Management Methods to Minimize Herbicide Use

Vegetation management methods will include the following types of control methods to limit the amount of herbicide application:

- Cultural Control – Use of ground cover and sustainable landscape methods.
- Physical Control – Street sweeping, crack sealing, and repaving.
- Mechanical Control – Hand cutting, mowing, and selective trimming.
- Chemical Control – Foliar herbicide treatments and cut stump surface treatment.

The proper control methods to treat an area will be selected based on a variety of factors with the goal to achieve a long-term and low maintenance vegetation management program.

Cultural Control

Cultural control methods rely primarily on the use of groundcover where appropriate. These include the use of groundcovers that can help outcompete and/or crowd out target vegetation.

Cultural control methods also include sustainable landscape techniques for new development and reconstruction that minimize roadside maintenance and promote active planting of competing vegetation. This may include:

- Encouraging the use of seeding and planting specifications that require less maintenance.
- Planting of native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses.
- Planting of native species to compete and replace undesirable/invasive species, and allow private abutters to maintain ROWs, where applicable.
- Encouraging the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques including raingardens that are maintained by the owner.

LID is an environmental design approach based on a variety of techniques and methods with the goal to cost-effectively reduce negative impacts to surrounding natural resources. Through various methods, the City encourages the use of raingardens, bio-retention areas, and other similar infiltration type stormwater management methods that also control groundcover. All of these methods aim to promote stormwater management, groundwater infiltration, and help eliminate unwanted vegetation by reducing disturbance and promoting the use of native species to outcompete unwanted vegetation.

Physical Control

Physical control methods will rely primarily on pavement maintenance, which will consist of sealing cracks, street sweeping, and other general ROW repairs including repaving and installing new sidewalks. This helps to eliminate weeds by preventing access to both sun, soil, and the build-up of sediment and other material that can provide a medium for plant growth.

Mechanical Control – Methods may include hand cutting, mowing and/or selective trimming.

Hand cutting – Consists of the mechanical cutting of target species using chain saws and brush saws. Target species are cut as close to the ground as practical. Hand cutting is used in order to protect environmentally sensitive sites. It is also used on target vegetation greater than twelve feet in height. Hand cutting is used on those restricted sites where terrain, site size or sensitivity renders mowing impossible or impractical. Hand cutting may be practiced at any time during the year.

Mowing – Consists of the mechanical cutting of target vegetation using push mowers, large rider mowers, rear deck mowers, brush mowers, edgers and line trimmers. Selection of specific equipment is based on terrain, target vegetation size and equipment availability. Mowing will be used in areas where terrain and target stem size permit safe and efficient use of the above machinery. Mowing will be the principal method for vegetation control along road shoulders and where herbicide use is prohibited. Mowing will be conducted seasonally when weather conditions allow.

Selective Trimming – Consists of the mechanical pruning of the tops of encroaching limbs of tall trees that may hamper roadway, sidewalk, trail and bike path access. Trimming will be accomplished using aerial lifts via trucks or tractors, or if terrain or obstruction prevents equipment access, by climbing crews.

Chemical Control

Chemical control may include foliar treatment and/or cut stump surface treatments.

Foliar Treatment – Involves the selective application of an herbicide diluted in water, in accordance with manufacturers' directions, to the foliage. Several types of equipment for foliar treatments may be used. These could include: backpack sprayers, hand-held pump sprayers or a motorized truck-mounted sprayer. Foliar treatments with backpack and hand-held pump sprayers are used on low-density target vegetation. The herbicide solution will be diluted to the lowest possible percent that will provide effective control of target species. Motorized application equipment may be used for foliar treatment on areas where the vegetation density is high and the use of a backpack spray may not be as effective.

These foliar applications will take place when plants are in full leaf and actively growing, and in accordance with the product label. When used according to the City's herbicide application program, foliar treatments are an effective and efficient method to control the whole target plant. Controlling the whole target plant reduces the potential of resprout from live root systems.

Cut Stump Surface Treatment – Consist of mechanical cutting of target species using chain saws, and followed by herbicide treatment applied with a squirt bottle, a hand pump sprayer, or painted on the freshly cut surface of the stump. The cutting procedure is identical to that outlined in the Hand Cutting section of this VMP. Cut stump application can be effective during the dormant period, however, it may not be effective during times of sap flow (i.e., maple and birches during the months of February through early April), as flowing sap will limit the herbicide from being absorbed into the stump down to the roots. Certain types of herbicide formulations are limited to freshly cut stumps to be effective.

Monitoring

All roadsides will be surveyed prior to any scheduled treatment program. Monitoring will be conducted by foot and/or by vehicle. Monitoring of areas may result from requests from the public. All monitoring records will be maintained by the City.

Record Keeping

A log of areas surveyed will be maintained by the City for future planning and reference. Areas maintained either through physical repair, mechanical or chemical control will be recorded.

Control Tactics

The decision to use one or a combination of vegetation control techniques will depend on the site-specific situation. The control tactics selected will control target vegetation in the most environmentally sensitive and efficient manner.

Table A. Summary of Control Methods						
Control Method/Target Vegetation	Grasses	Low-Growth Nonpoisonous ¹	Low-Growth Poisonous ¹	Tall Growth Nonpoisonous ²	Tall Growth Poisonous ²	Conditions
Sustainable Landscape	X	X				Where landscape, traffic and safety conditions allow.
Mechanical – Hand Cutting		X		X		Where landscape prevents mowing; individual trees or branches.
Mechanical - Mowing	X	X				Where landscape, traffic, and safety conditions allow.
Chemical – Foliar³		X	X			Within cracks or joints; when mechanical methods pose risk to workers safety
Chemical – Cut-Stump¹				X	X	Growth is persistent and invasive in nature.

¹Low Growth – herbaceous growth (generally 3-4’ high, grasses, vines, short woody growth)

²Tall Growth – woody vegetation greater than 4’ in height

³Except in no-spray areas

Justification of Herbicide Use

The purpose of this VMP is to compile vegetation management methods with the goal to minimization the use of herbicide within ROWs. Vegetation management along public ways is necessary to control unwanted vegetation that can be a public nuisance, obstructs views, and creates a traffic or pedestrian hazard. By following the proposed vegetation management methods discussed in this plan, physical and mechanical treatment methods of most plants that interfere with traffic, visibility, and safety should suffice in most instances. However, chemical controls are necessary in management situations where topography, access, growth rate, species specific factors, worker safety, or environmental concerns limit the potential for control by physical or mechanical methods.

Chemical controls are often the preferred method or the only method of controlling plants which pose a health hazard. Poison Ivy, for example, is extremely hazardous to handle, biologically resistant to mechanical removal, and can pose a serious threat public health.

Due to the low growing nature of Poison Ivy, and the fact that it grows along stolons and reproduces both by fine and fibrous rhizomes as well as by berry, it is nearly impossible to control through cultivation, hand pulling, or mowing at the height generally used in roadside mowing operations. Moreover, the climbing characteristics of this plant over stone walls, up tree trunks, and around guardrails, make mechanical control out of the question for safety and economic reasons. In some locations, the use of herbicides may help develop herbaceous communities that out-compete Poison Ivy, and otherwise promote natural control of these plants.

For grass like species, mowing will generally control their growth within ROWs, and although grass is more often a desirable vegetative cover along public ways, in target areas, it is difficult and sometimes dangerous to remove by mechanical treatment methods alone. These areas include, but are not limited to, cracks in asphalt, along guardrails, paved traffic islands, sidewalks, and curbs. In these instances, grass can be identified as target vegetation where herbicide use would be justified.

Small woody plants that are growing along the road shoulder in an accessible location will usually be mowed along with the roadside grass. Woody plants that are growing over obstacles that would impede the mower, or have a viney growth habit and are not practical to hand cut or chip, or that grow very rapidly, can be controlled through the use of the foliar application of herbicides.

Woody vegetation (low and high growth species) growing along the ROW that interfere with pedestrian or vehicle safety is controlled by a variety of techniques. Pruning or ground cutting using hand tools or chain saws primarily controls large woody vegetation. Depending upon the species of plant removed and its proximity to other vegetation, these stumps may be treated with an herbicide to prevent re-sprouting in certain instances, although they often can be removed by mechanical methods alone.

Finally, invasive species elimination is sometimes warranted to promote the growth of a more diverse mix of vegetative species and improve natural drainage and wildlife habitat. Managing invasive species via mechanical means can be ineffective and/or detrimental depending on the species, making the colonization stronger. In these situations, the use of an herbicide may be necessary. Working in conjunction with the Conservation Commission, there may be opportunities to remove invasive material and encourage the growth of native species.

Identification of Sensitive Areas

Sensitive areas are defined within 333 CMR 11.00 as areas within ROWs in which public health and environmental concerns warrant special protection to further minimize risks of unreasonable adverse effects of herbicides. These include public groundwater sources, Class A public surface water sources, associated surface water bodies, tributaries, Class B drinking water intakes, private wells, state listed species habitat, wetlands, waters over wetlands, riverfront areas, certified vernal pools, inhabited areas, and agricultural areas. Sensitive areas will be identified through the use of existing data and verified when necessary in the field.

It should be noted that the City of Leominster has an active Order of Conditions (DEP File# 199-1011) allowing the DPW to conduct Rights-of-Way maintenance and other activities within ROWs near areas jurisdictional to the Leominster Conservation Commission utilizing best management practices (BMPs). The Leominster DPW has also been trained to be cognizant of sensitive areas and how to install and identify the proper methods to best protect sensitive areas utilizing BMPs during maintenance events. The conservation Agent also works closely with the DPW and takes an active role with identify potential sensitive areas throughout the City.

Sensitive Areas Basemap

There are several readily available sources of information that can be used to develop a draft sensitive areas basemap. These sources include:

- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Water Supply Maps (1:25,000).
- Aerial Photographs.
- MassDEP Wetlands Conservancy Maps (scale 1:1,000).
- Municipal maps and records including those from the City of Leominster Health Department to identify private water supplies.
- Regional Planning Agency maps and records.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands Inventory Maps.
- Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP).
- Available MassGIS maps (MassGIS Oliver)

Identification of Treatment Zones

The Leominster Department of Public Works (DPW) will utilize GIS software to identify sensitive areas and mark proposed treatment zones on a VMP basemap. DPW staff will visually survey treatment zones in conjunction with the Conservation Agent where applicable to demarcate any additional sensitive areas not already identified on the VMP basemap. Sensitive areas identified in the field that are not already on the VMP basemap will be added or adjusted as needed. Treatment zones located within sensitive areas will be adjusted according to the Sensitive Areas Restrictions listed in Table B.

Field Verification of Sensitive Areas & Marking of Treatment Zones

Utilizing the aforementioned VMP basemap, Leominster DPW staff will deploy in advance of treatment crews to identify the treatment zones in the field. All treatment zones will be identified and marked on the sensitive areas maps. Sensitive areas in the vicinity of the treatment zones will be confirmed during this field effort, if possible, and any additional sensitive areas identified in the field or corrections will be applied to the basemap. Treatment zones located within no spray areas will be adjusted according to the Sensitive Areas Restrictions listed in Table B.

Once treatment zones are finalized, DPW staff will mark the stop and start points for each zone. Treatment zones will be identified with orange paint on the curb, guardrail or in the roadway at the start and finish of each treatment zone or with orange flags marked in the same manner, as appropriate.

Table B. Sensitive Area Restrictions

Sensitive Area	No Spray Areas	Limited Spray Areas	Where Identified
Wetlands and Water Over Wetlands	Within 10 feet (unless provisions of 333 CMR 11.04(4)(c) are followed)	10 – 100 feet; 12 months must elapse between applications; Selective low pressure, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	YOP Maps and identify on site
Certified Vernal Pool	Within 10 feet	10 feet to the outer boundary of any Certified Vernal Pool Habitat; 12 months must elapse between applications; Selective low pressure, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	YOP Maps and identify on site
Public Ground Water Supply	Within 400 feet (Zone I)	Zone II or IWPA (Interim Wellhead Protection Area which is the Primary Recharge Area); 24 months must elapse between applications; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	YOP Maps
Public Surface Water Supply	Within 100 feet of any Class A public surface water source	100 feet to the outer boundary of the Zone A; 24 months must elapse between Applications; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	YOP Maps
	Within 10 feet of any tributary or associated surface water body located outside of the Zone A	10 feet to the outer boundary of the Zone A; 24 months must elapse between applications; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	
	Within 100 feet of any tributary or associated surface water body located within the Zone A of a Class A public surface water source		
	Within a lateral distance of 100 feet for 400 feet upstream of any Class B Drinking Water Intake	Within a lateral distance of between 100 -200 feet for 400 feet upstream of intake; 24 months must elapse between applications; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or basal or cut-stump applications	
Private Water Supply	Within 50 feet	50 – 100 feet; 24 months must elapse between applications; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	YOP Maps and identify on site
Surface Waters	Within 10 feet from mean annual high-water line	10 feet from the mean annual high water line and the outer boundary of the Riverfront Area; 12 months must elapse between applications; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications	YOP Maps and identify on site
Agricultural and Inhabited Areas	N/A	0 – 100 feet; 12 months must elapse between application; Selective chemical, using foliar techniques or cut-stump applications.	Identify on site
State-listed Species Habitat	No application within habitat area except in accordance with a YOP approved in writing by the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife		YOP & NHESP Maps

Operational Guidelines for Applicators Relative to Herbicide Use

As required by regulations, application to roadside ROWs must hold a valid Category 40 pesticide certification from the MA DAR. The applicator(s) will be City staff and/or a certified contractor working under the supervision of the City of Leominster. All applicators and their supervisors will have a copy of the VMP and YOP with them at all times for reference during the herbicide application. A Daily Vegetation Management Report form will be filed at the end of each day with the individual supervising the YOP. This will include the following information:

- Applicator name
- Weather conditions during application
- Identification of site/work area
- Type of equipment and hours used
- Method of application
- Target vegetation
- Herbicide, amount/concentration used
- Identification of adjuvants or dilutants and amount/concentration used
- Unusual conditions or incidents noted
- Public inquiries noted
- Recording/verification of sensitive areas
- Lane miles treated
- Total amount of herbicide used
- Man hours (actual spray hours) vs. total herbicide used.

In addition to the applicable rules and regulations, applicators will adhere to the following operational guidelines.

Sensitive Area Restrictions

In defined sensitive areas, there exists a no-spray area where herbicide use is prohibited and a zone where herbicide use is allowed under certain conditions. In places around sensitive areas where herbicide use is allowed, only the minimum labeled rate of application for the control of target species can be applied.

Equipment Calibration

Foliar application equipment will be calibrated prior to application and in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. Equipment will be adjusted to deliver an herbicide solution that minimizes herbicide overspray. Applicator nozzles will be adjusted to apply a coarse spray pattern.

Weather

Herbicide applications will not be conducted during periods of moderate to heavy rainfall, or during periods of high wind. Foliar applications can be effective in light mist situations; however, any measurable rainfall that creates leaf runoff will wash the herbicide off target vegetation. If foliar applications are interrupted by unexpected rainfall, the treatment will not resume until the rain ends and active leaf runoff has ceased.

To minimize off-target drift, the applicator will comply with the following restrictions:

- During periods of wind, which are strong enough to bend the tops of the main stems of trees on the roadside, the applicator will periodically observe the application of the foliar treatment to ensure that there is no significant movement of the herbicide. If the applicator can see the herbicide moving off target, the application will immediately stop until the wind has subsided enough to permit further applications.
- Herbicide solution to be used for a foliage application may contain low drift agents. Low drift agents may be added to the foliage herbicide solutions as per the low drift agent label. In moderate wind conditions, as per label recommendations, more low drift agent may be added, at the discretion of the applicator to control increased drift.
- Foliar treatment will not be made to target vegetation that exceeds twelve feet in height.

Qualifications of Individuals Developing & Submitting the Plan

Mr. Raymond Racine is the director for the City of Leominster Department of Public Works and played a vital role with the implantation the Order of Conditions (DEP File# 199-1011) allowing the DPW to conduct Rights-of-Way maintenance near sensitive areas throughout the City. Mr. David Smith is the General Foreman for the Department of Public Works and is a key asset to the management of ROWs within the City. Mr. Smith has recently completed herbicide application training and holds an Herbicide Applicators License issued by the State. Mr. Marco Bangrazi is the City of Leominster Conservation Agent who takes an active role to verify the City is in compliance with environmental regulations when work is conducted near sensitive areas. Collectively, Mr. Racine, Mr. Smith, and Mr. Bangrazi will oversee the implementation of the VMP and YOP and the activities that are described within these plans.

Alternative Land Use Options

Every effort will be given for alternative land use options or agreements that may be established with individuals, state, federal, or municipal agencies to minimize the need for herbicides. However, there are specific criteria to be met for adoption of alternative land use options. First, the alternative land use option must control the undesirable vegetation in a similar manner environmentally conscious manner as allowed in this VMP.

For example, a common practice of land owners is to mow their property abutting roadways, effectively maintaining the road shoulder. In this instance, the monitoring program would reveal that the area does not warrant vegetation control. A written agreement with landowners for alternative vegetation control methods will be obtained. This agreement would clearly specify that the DPW will not treat vegetation in these areas and outline the landowner's responsibilities for vegetation control.

Remedial Plan to Address Spills and Related Accidents

All mixing and loading of herbicides will be conducted at a city facility where the herbicides are stored. If the application is being completed by an outside contractor, the contractor may only load or mix herbicide at their offsite facility or at the designated City

facility. Only the amount of herbicide necessary to carry out the vegetation control, based on monitoring results, will be mixed daily to ensure that there will be no waste and will minimize potential complications. The vehicles carrying out the spray operations will be equipped with a bag of absorbent, activated charcoal, leak-proof containers, a broom, and a shovel in event of a minor spill. A log of the current herbicides being transported within the vehicle will be kept readily available within the cab of the vehicle. Herbicide labels and fact sheets will be carried on-site by the applicator.

Spills requiring immediate clean-up action include:

- Herbicides, fuels, oils and other motor/hydraulic fluids

As soon as any spill is observed, immediate action will be taken to contain the spill and protect the spill area. The cause of the spill must be identified and secured. Spill containment will be accomplished by covering the spill with absorptive clay or other absorptive material or, for large spills, building clay or soil dikes to impede spill progress. Until completely remediated, the spill area will be protected by the placement of barriers and by the delineation of the spill area by crew members. If a fire is involved, care will be taken to avoid breathing fumes from any burning chemicals.

Minor spills of liquid herbicide will be remedied by soaking up the spill with adsorption clay or other adsorptive material and placing it in leak proof containers, removed from the site and disposed of properly. Minor spills involving dry herbicides, such as granulars, will be swept up or shoveled up directly in leak proof containers, removed from the site and disposed of properly. All contaminated soil will be placed in leak proof containers, removed from the site and disposed of properly. Any minor spill will be reported to the MA DAR, Division of Crop & Pest Services.

Major spills will be handled in a similar manner as minor spills, except in cases where the spill cannot be contained and/or removed by the crew. In this case, the MassDEP Emergency Response Unit and the MA DAR, Division of Crop & Pest Services must be contacted.

Emergency first responders (including, but not limited to, fire and police) should be immediately notified of a major spill and/or any size incident deemed a possible risk to public health, safety and the environment.

MassDEP will be contacted when there is a spill of a reportable quantity, regardless of major or minor spill status and in accordance with 310 CMR 40.00 Massachusetts Contingency Plan.

In the event of a spill: Information on safety precautions and clean up procedures may be gathered from the following sources:

- Herbicide label
- Herbicide Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS)
- Herbicide Manufacturer

DOW	(800) 992-5994
Dupont	(800) 441-3637
Monsanto	(314) 697-4000
NuFarm	(877) 325-1840

- MA DAR, Division of Crop & Pest Services.....(617) 626-1720
- Massachusetts DEP Emergency Response.....(888) 304-1133
- Massachusetts DPH Environmental Toxicology Program...(617) 624-5757
- Massachusetts Poison Control Center.....(800) 222-1222
- Leominster Department of Public Works.....(978) 534-7590
- Leominster Fire Department.....(978) 534-7541
- Leominster Police Department.....(978) 534-5411
- Leominster Health Department.....(978) 572-6210
- Chem-Trec.....(800)-424-9300
- National Pesticide Information Center.....(800)-858-7378
- National Animal Poison Control Center.....(888)-426-4435

Monitoring Plan

On an annual basis, the City will evaluate the success of the Vegetation Management Program. The goal of this monitoring plan is to evaluate the relative success of vegetation control efforts. Following application after an appropriate period of time, treatment areas will be revisited. The survivorship or regrowth of nuisance vegetation will be recorded and evaluated at an annual meeting in the fall to determine whether the program is meeting its goals. Discussion items at this annual meeting will include where the herbicide was used, where it worked and how much herbicide was used per lane mile. Recommendations on location and use will be reflected in the next year’s YOP as applicable.

Notification Procedures

Once approved, a copy of the VMP will be provided to the Mayor of Leominster, Board of Health, and Conservation Commission. Upon approval of the VMP and YOP and 21-days in advance of the application of herbicide to a ROW, the City will notify the MA DAR, Board of Health, water supplier, Mayor of Leominster, and Conservation Commission of the application. Notification will include: method and location of application, herbicide fact sheet, U.S. EPA registration number for herbicide and applicator contact information. Additionally, at least 48-hours prior to a ROW herbicide application, the applicant will publish in a local newspaper the following information: methods and location of pesticide application, approximate dates of herbicide application, name of herbicide(s) to be used, description/purpose of application, and contact information for the designated individual representing the City whom citizens can contact with questions or concerns.