

## A PRESCRIPTION FOR A HEALTHIER ROW MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Last issue provided a health checklist for reviewing ROW management programs. The bad news is many programs fell into the “healthy but needs work” or the “emergency response” categories. The good news is there are straightforward ways to move a program forward into a healthier, cost effective condition. The checklist questions were designed to evaluate several different areas of a program;

- How current is the information for the system’s projected maintenance needs?
- How diverse is the program’s response to various maintenance scenarios?
- How in-depth is the program’s planning for short/long term effects?
- How effective is the program and how is the effectiveness evaluated?

Having up-to-date system knowledge is essential because it protects the reliability of the circuits, prevents redundant expenditures, and allows for future projected costs. An example of this would be having solid data to support presentations given to company board members or superiors.

Program responses should be as diverse as the mixed circumstances found in most systems. With the advent of new technologies, such as field data collection and growth regulators, and the available resources of “for-hire” manpower, program managers have a wider range of “tools” to choose from. An example of this is the short-term service offered for companies who require system planners to address immediate needs within a limited budget. These “immediate needs” may be planning for major line rebuilds, road widening, high outage areas, or areas with sensitive customers or environmental issues.

Right of Way programs have it hard; many companies view it as a “money hole” because it is a never-ending cost. It is a necessary part of the whole company and a well-planned maintenance program can make a system more safe and cost effective. An example of this is increasing the tree removal rate to between 35-45% (for at least one year) and implementing a targeted herbicide program. Within two years, maintenance costs should decrease and reliability should improve.

Program effectiveness can be evaluated in several ways; adherence to a formal contract, auditing circuit work performed, and maintaining circuit records for comparison. By collecting data for trims and removals, a tracking system can be created to assess the effectiveness of the plan being used. Another example is being able to predict the cost per circuit for the upcoming maintenance year.

Although maintenance programs never bring money into a company, it can be cost effective and it can be the only personal contact the customer has with the company. If your company maintenance program needs help with one or more of these areas, please contact Plant Growth Management Systems.

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*Please contact us for help within your maintenance system , management planning needs, and/or integration of herbicide/ TGR/auditing programs. Other areas we can help are budget modifications, training for effective trimming, line clearance contract negotiations, specification design, and adherence.*