



Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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Jim Doyle
Governor

Frank J. Busalacchi
Secretary

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September 13, 2005

Mr. Robert Trimmier, Co-Chair
Ms. Gretchen Schuldt, Co-Chair
Citizens Allied for Sane Highways
P.O. Box 080215
Milwaukee, WI 53208

Dear Mr. Trimmer and Ms. Schuldt:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the spread of invasive plants on Wisconsin State Trunk Highways. The Department of Transportation has a responsibility to operate the highway system in a safe and efficient manner. Under the Maintenance and Traffic Operations program, the Department is charged with numerous activities ranging from maintaining roadways and roadsides to plowing and salting in the winter to installing signs, signals, and pavement markings. Controlling noxious weeds is also a maintenance activity.

Due to dramatic funding reductions decided upon by the legislature during the 2003-05 budget process, the Department has been forced to reduce or eliminate applications of herbicide to control noxious weeds.

As a maintenance activity, the control of noxious weeds can only be funded from the maintenance appropriation, which has its budget authority defined in the statutes. Even though the Department receives funds for other types of programs such as Highway Improvement, it is limited by law in terms of how much money can be used for maintenance purposes.

In the face of large cuts to maintenance funding, the Department went through a long process of prioritizing various maintenance activities with a focus on safety and mobility and allocated the limited funds accordingly. Unfortunately, spraying noxious weeds was one of several activities that was either reduced or eliminated.

This decision was certainly not from a lack of understanding or lack of interest. In fact, the Department continues to look for ways to support efforts to control noxious weeds when it can be done without any new financial commitments. For example, the Department remains an active participant in the Governor's Invasive Species Council and is currently looking into whether to issue permits to volunteer organizations that wish to help control these noxious weeds on the state highway rights of way.

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I share your concern about the spread of invasive species in the State of Wisconsin. The Department will continue to evaluate this issue when prioritizing activities for the new 2005-07 maintenance budget and will consider restoring noxious **weed spraying** if sufficient funding is available.

If you have any further questions please contact Mr. Dave Vieth, Director of Highway Operations, at 608-267-8999.

Sincerely,



Frank J. Busalacchi
Secretary

cc: Governor Jim Doyle
Chris Klein, Executive Assistant, DOT
Dave Vieth, Director, Highway Operations