

ENGINEERING DIRECTIVES AND STANDARDS

Volume : 1 Effective Date :
Chapter : 1 Revision Date : 06/21/2002
Section : 1 Subject : **CLEARING AND THINNING OF INTERSTATE INTERSECTIONS BY MUNICIPALITIES FOR BEAUTIFICATION**
Directive : 22

A COPY OF THIS DIRECTIVE SHALL BE PRESENTED TO EACH APPLICANT WITH THE REQUEST FOR PROJECT PERMIT FORM NO. DOTD 03-41-0593

1. **PURPOSE:** The purpose of this directive is to establish policy and procedure for municipalities interested in the beautification of interstate interchanges by selectively clearing and thinning forested areas and roadside vegetation.
2. **SCOPE:** This directive will provide a procedure for municipalities interested in beautifying interstate interchange rights-of-way. The area to be considered shall be the quadrants of the Interstate intersection and the areas between the acceleration and deceleration lanes and the control of access fence closest to each for a distance of 500 feet, or to the gore area, whichever is longer.
3. **GENERAL:** The Department Of Transportation And Development is committed to the preservation of roadside vegetation along our transportation corridors, where feasible. It may be necessary to remove vegetation when maintenance and safety concerns warrant such action. The Department may also consider allowing the trimming or removal of vegetation at an interstate intersection or "gateway" to an adjacent municipality. The thinning or removal of roadside vegetation may increase the traveling public's awareness of the municipality's presence.

Factors considered before a final determination is made include, but are not limited to, adjacent land use, visual screening of and from the roadway, tree species types and conditions, and public opinion. . Maintenance of these areas will become the responsibility of the permittee. To promote optimum survival when replacement vegetation is to be planted, permits will only be issued between November 1 and April 15. Visibility improvement will not be undertaken in any of the following instances:

- 1) Clearing to provide for outdoor advertising.
 - 2) A right-of-way take is imminent within one year.
 - 3) Construction is imminent within two or more years.
 - 4) The trees or other vegetation to be thinned, selectively removed, or removed and enhanced are a distance greater than 500' measured along the interstate from the intersection or the gore area, whichever is longer.
4. **APPLICATION PROCEDURE:** Requests for vegetation thinning and clearing permits shall be made using the application for Project Permit Form No. DOTD 03-41-0593, copies of which can be obtained and shall be maintained in each district office. A copy of this directive shall be furnished to each applicant with Form No. DOTD 03-41-0593.
The application for a permit shall include the following:

- 1) Name of Applicant
- 2) Location of intersection and Parish.

- 3) Nature of work to be done – (i.e. Clearing and removal of underbrush and thinning and removal of no more than (60%) of existing trees that are 6” in diameter and under.)
- 4) A resolution from the municipality’s governing body stating it’s intention of clearing and maintaining the area for beautification.
- 5) An attached plan of the area and work to be performed.
- 6) An attached report by a forester from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture stating the condition and health of the trees in the areas to be affected. This report shall include:
 - a) Name of species, approximate diameter, height and percentage of existing trees that are projected for removal.
 - b) Where trees are in groups, the diameters and heights may be shown for each group as a whole; (i.e., pines 6" to 12" diameter, 30' to 50' high.)
 - c) A monetary value for the trees to be removed.

As part of his review, the District Traffic Operations Engineer and Permit Specialist will verify the location of the proposed work to be accomplished and will forward the request to the Headquarters Permits Unit with digital photographs of the area.

Where Landscaping Enhancement is requested, a plan shall be submitted to the Department for review, comments or approval. The plan shall be designed and stamped by a Landscape Architect, at no cost to the Department. A licensed landscape contractor, at no cost to the Department, shall perform enhancement plantings. The Louisiana Horticulture Commission, Department of Agriculture, shall license the Landscape Architect and Landscape Contractor, hired by the municipality. The municipality agrees, as a condition of the permit, that it accepts and will comply with all Louisiana Horticulture Laws, Rules, and Regulations. The permit shall contain a warranty clause wherein the permittee agrees to replace any enhancement planting not living or seriously damaged for the life of the permit.

The monetary value of the merchantable trees removed, as assessed by the Department of Agriculture forester, shall be remitted to the Department as a condition of the permit.

5. **WORK ZONE REGULATIONS:** Compliance with the following procedures will be required. Non-compliance will result in revocation of the permit.

- a) Trimming and removal of trees shall be performed by a licensed, bonded and insured tree service at no cost to the Department. No topping of trees will be allowed.
- b) Access to the work area shall be from the main roadway or ramps. The permittee shall conduct his operation in accordance with DOTD Maintenance Standards including appropriate traffic control devices. The disturbed access areas shall be restored to original condition upon completion of the work.
- c) Drainage shall not be impeded.
- d) Work will be performed only during regular daylight department hours, Monday through Friday excluding legal holidays.
- e) Vegetation that has been cut will not be left overnight within 34 feet of the travel lane or within highway right-of-way. No debris will be left over a weekend or holiday. No burning will be permitted on the highway right-of-way. Stumps shall be cut and ground flush with the ground and treated with an approved herbicide immediately after the stump is cut.
- f) An approved herbicide shall be used as needed to maintain a brush free appearance for the period of time the municipality wishes to maintain the area.
- g) Mowing of the cleared area shall be required to maintain the same level of maintenance as the surrounding area that is maintained by the Department.
- h) Work shall not interfere with traffic on the roadway or shoulder at anytime. Parking of vehicles on roadway or shoulder shall not be permitted. All loading, hauling or other work associated with the permit shall be conducted without damage to the roadway. Appropriate warning signs shall be placed by the permittee in advance of the work area in accordance with the current edition of Part VI of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) – Standards and Guides for Traffic Controls for Streets and Highway Construction, Maintenance, Utility and Incidental Maintenance Operations.
- i) Vegetation clearing or thinning for beautification shall not increase the area maintained by the Department of Transportation and Development. If the municipality decides not to maintain the cleared area, the Department shall let the area revert to the original condition before clearing.
- j) Where operations are conducted in an unsatisfactory manner or for any other cause, the Department shall revoke the permit and any future permitting will be withheld until the unsatisfactory condition has been corrected.

6. **CONSIDERATIONS FOR MUNICIPALITIES:** If the timber removed from state property is merchantable, the municipality shall be required to remit the assessed amount to the state. Any municipality contemplating this permit should be aware that the process to maintain the cleared area to a mowable area does not produce the ultimately desired result. The use of herbicides for two or more years to prevent the re-occurrence of volunteer plants and brush can be expected. The final manicured appearance may not be attained for a period of 4 to 5 years.

7. **EFFECTIVE DATE:** This policy will become effective upon receipt of this directive.

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CHIEF ENGINEER