

DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release April 16, 1980

David Klinger 202/343-5634

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE EXPLORES HABITAT BENEFITS OF POWER LINE RIGHTS-OF-WAY

Electric power transmission line rights-of-way -- slashes of wasteland meandering across the countryside or beneficial habitat for wildlife?

They can be either, depending upon how wisely these high-voltage corridors are managed, according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Service's National Power Plant Team has just completed a technical assistance manual to promote beneficial use by aiding wildlife biologists and right-of-way managers in designing and directing wildlife management plans for transmission line rights-of-way.

The Interior Department agency estimates that 300,000 miles of transmission lines occupy about 5 million acres of land throughout the United States. Much of this land is suburban, rural, forested, or uninhabited by people -- conditions ideally suited to wildlife under the right vegetation and land management programs.

With the acreage devoted to rights-of-way expected to double or triple in the next 30 years as national energy development accelerates, the Fish and Wildlife Service has produced a management manual that combines the goals and expertise of utility right-of-way maintenance personnel with that of wildlife biologists.

Up to this time, economics has dictated the manner in which most utilities create and maintain transmission line rights-of-way, the most important considerations being transmission reliability and safety. Relatively little

(over)

attention has been given to management plans that integrate fish and wildlife needs into the overall design, construction, and maintenance of these corridors. The Fish and Wildlife Service's new manual, Management of Transmission Line Rights-of-Way for Fish and Wildlife, suggests that consultation with wildlife biologists in the initial stages of right-of-way planning will permit better management than if such consultation comes after the corridor is established.

Bulldozing, scraping, and other nonselective methods of clearing land promote erosion and destroy wildlife habitat unless a right-of-way is quickly stabilized by planting or seeding. Management of Transmission Line Rights-of-Way for Fish and Wildlife suggests that selective vegetation control methods, either chemical or mechanical, permit the establishment of a stable, low-growing plant base that inhibits the invasion of tall-growing woody species. In this way, right-of-way maintenance costs for utilities are reduced and high-quality wildlife habitat is produced.

Advance planning for fish and wildlife can also prevent needless problems for right-of-way managers. Indiscriminate use of herbicides can eliminate plant species useful to wildlife and may pollute nearby streams.

Management of Transmission Line Rights-of-Way for Fish and Wildlife is a three-volume manual which describes general strategies for effective right-of-way management. Various techniques for maintenance of cover vegetation are integrated into general wildlife management techniques, enabling users to develop specific management plans for any of 61 biological regions of the United States. The emphasis, however, is on biological communities rather than single species, and techniques are based on plant responses to various ways in which land and vegetation are currently altered and managed.

Volume 1 presents general vegetation management strategies and background information on right-of-way costs, engineering constraints, land use rights, vegetation maintenance, and wildlife management. Volumes 2 and 3 present ecological information on selected plant and wildlife species in the eastern and western United States, respectively.

"With this kind of information and approach, biologists and right-of-way managers will be able to assess the management implications of transmission line right-of-way siting and other habitat modifications on fish and wildlife and provide that information to decisionmakers," said Lynn Greenwalt, director of the Fish and Wildlife Service. "This manual is a part of our Biological Services Program which is providing the type of information necessary to incorporate environmental considerations into resource development decisions."

Management of Transmission Line Rights-of-Way for Fish and Wildlife is available for \$22.00 (the set) from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20240 (specify stock numbers: Vol. 1 - 024-010-00520-3; Vol. 2 - 024-010-00521-1; Vol. 3 - 024-010-00522-0). Individually, Vol. 1 sells for \$5.50, Vol. 2 sells for \$6.50, and Vol. 3 sells for \$10.00 (specify individual stock numbers for single volumes).