



**MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE**

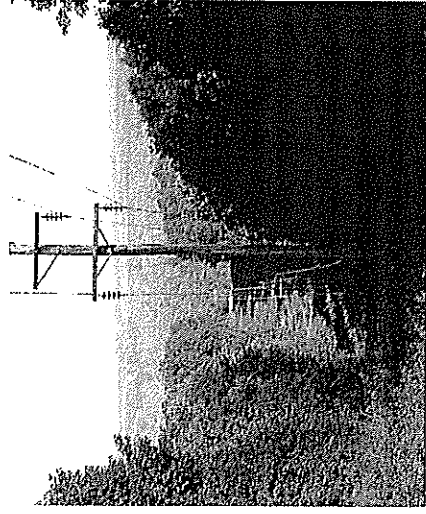
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative



## RIGHT-OF-WAY VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Reliable electricity is not just a luxury; it's an expectation. Our chief responsibility at Midwest Energy Cooperative is to provide a reliable and safe electric distribution system to our members, and one of our biggest obstacles is trees. Trees, vines and tall brush often grow into or fall onto power lines, disrupting the electric power to homes and businesses in the service area. Do you remember the 2003 Northeast power blackout that affected 50 million people? That occurred when an electric transmission line contacted a tree growing underneath it.

With a goal of improving your service experience, Midwest Energy Cooperative employs a strategic and proactive line, tree and brush maintenance program on rights-of-way across our service territory. This flyer includes information about how Midwest Energy Cooperative manages the vegetation under its electric lines that cross your property and also how this maintenance work is beneficial for our environment. With your help, Midwest Energy can continue to provide reliable and affordable power that is also safe for everyone, including our wildlife.



### Managing Vegetation

Midwest Energy uses a variety of methods to control the vegetation within our rights-of-way. By identifying the plants that cause the problem, effective work methods can be used that take into consideration safety, impact on the environment, efficiency and cost. Our approach is called Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM), and methods typically include a combination of mowing, hand cutting and herbicides. The goal of IVM is to control the tall-growing trees and brush that cause safety and reliability problems, while promoting low growing plants such as grasses, wildflowers and shrubs that are more beneficial to wildlife

by providing more sources for feeding, nesting, breeding, and protection:

There will be some over-grown, brushy areas that may be mowed and others where only hand cutting is needed. There are also areas where herbicides are used to control the unwanted vegetation after the initial brush is removed. The herbicides used by Midwest Energy Cooperative are registered with the Environmental Protection Agency for utility right-of-way use and are applied by licensed and trained personnel. These products are selectively applied to the targeted plants and stop the growth and any re-sprouting that may occur. These specialized herbicides block the chemicals that are needed by the plant to grow and survive, but these plant chemicals are not found in fish, birds, animals or people. And when compared to the dangers of flying debris, fuel, oil and exhaust discharges from mowers and saws, herbicides become an even better alternative in many situations.

## Benefiting Wildlife

Rights-of-way that are managed using IVM also provide better habitat for many types of wildlife. By eliminating the tree species in a right-of-way corridor, native grasses, wildflowers (forbs) and shrubs can establish and increase the usable amount of habitat for more species of wildlife. Bees and butterflies use the wildflowers, birds use the shrubs for food and nest sites, and many other species use all the vegetation for nesting, feeding and breeding. Birds and mice also help control the unwanted vegetation by eating the seeds that these plants produce. And, the low growing plants can actually suppress the tall-growing, undesirable trees and keep them from becoming established. By maintaining grasses, wildflowers and shrubs as the dominant plants on rights-of-way, the number of trees, the amount of brush cutting, and herbicide applied in the future is significantly reduced.

Midwest Energy rights-of-way can also be managed to create early successional habitat that is in decline in many areas and to help populations of wildlife and plants that may be rare, threatened or endangered. Midwest even looks at how they can reduce soil erosion and improve water quality along these areas. Rights-of-way managed using IVM take all these criteria in consideration, leading to a more natural and biodiverse ecosystem for everyone.

## Our commitment

Midwest Energy is a certified member of *Energy for Wildlife*, a program by the National Wild Turkey Federation that assists companies in improving wildlife habitat while managing the vegetation on rights-of-way. This program is endorsed by the USDA Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other organizations as being a benefit to many wildlife species, including wild turkeys.

## What can you do?

There are a number of things every landowner can do to help prevent tree-related conflicts with electric power lines and improve wildlife habitat. A good first step is to only plant wildlife-beneficial shrubs or low-growing trees on the edges of a cleared right-of-way corridor for conservation plantings or when landscaping your property. Midwest Energy can assist you with a list of compatible species you can plant along our rights-of-way. We can also help get you in touch with other organizations and experts to assist you with projects concerning conservation, erosion control, windbreaks, or other wildlife habitat improvement projects.



If you have questions or need additional information about our right-of-way vegetation management work, please contact us toll free at 800.492.5989. Learn more about the National Wild Turkey Federation and its *Energy for Wildlife* program at 800-843-6983 or [NWTF.org](http://NWTF.org).

