

Lanark County adopts comprehensive vegetation management plan

At its regular meeting Wednesday night, Lanark County Council approved a bylaw authorizing a plan for managing vegetation in order to maintain safe roadsides by taking a long-term, multi-faceted approach.

“This is a comprehensive plan that divides roadsides into multiple sections and establishes goals for different plant heights,” explained Kurt Greaves, Lanark County CAO. “It matches plant species to each section to achieve optimal results. It is a holistic approach that provides a vision for the future.”

Councillors heard a presentation about the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Vegetation Management Plan by Dr. Nancy Cain of CVI IPM Services (Cain Vegetation Inc.) at the public works committee of the whole meeting in late November.

Dr. Cain explained part of the process is understanding the biology of the plants. “It’s getting the vegetation to work for you. There has to be suitability in zones based on height thresholds.”

She said the program involves regular monitoring, analysis of the problems and the cycles, and entering and mapping the data to record specific weed locations. “It is important to understand plant response to controls and to do this at effective times.” This includes plant response to competition in order to prevent re-infestation.

The plan includes using many control methods for both plant height (to help with sight lines on roadways) and to eliminate invasive species and noxious vegetation. In addition to the detailed mapping of roadside vegetation and characteristics using GPS technology, methods include hand digging, pulling, mowing, brushing, seeding and planting (both turf and native species) combined with spot spraying and targeted boom spraying.

The plan provides specific strategies for certain species. It also outlines safety measures for workers dealing with noxious plants, as well as equipment-cleaning protocols and training recommendations.

“This plan is exciting because it adopts an overall approach that uses plant biology to achieve long-term solutions,” said Lanark County Warden Bill Dobson (Montague Reeve). “For example, by relying on naturalized native species as well as seeding and planting more, such as wild strawberry, asters, cranberry and juniper in strategic sections of the roadsides, we will eventually be able to reduce reliance on mowing, brushing and spraying.”

Councillor Brian Campbell (Tay Valley Deputy Reeve), public works committee chair, noted the plan contains common-sense solutions for controlling invasive plants. “This can include such things as proper timing for mowing and ensuring it takes place from areas of low infestations of weeds like wild parsnip to areas of heavier infestation to reduce the risk of spreading these weeds by machines.”

“This plan will put us in a good position to deal not only with the current problems of wild parsnip, poison ivy, phragmites and knapweed, but also to prepare for future threats, such as giant hogweed and dog-strangling vine, that are now showing up in small pockets in Lanark County,” said Terry McCann, public works director.

In 2016 the county began a two-year pilot project that included roadside spraying and aggressive mowing for wild parsnip, an aggressive invasive plant.

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