



**NEVADA
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**Community
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Agency**

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Trisha Tillotson, Agency Director

Agriculture Commissioner | Building | Code & Compliance | Environmental Health | Planning | Public Works

NEVADA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BOARD WORKSHOP MEMO

MEETING DATE: January 23, 2025

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Trisha Tillotson, Community Development Agency (CDA) Director
David Garcia, Department of Public Works (DPW) Director

SUBJECT: Nevada County Vegetation Management Programs

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive the presentation and provide feedback on County maintained roadway and Office of Emergency Services (OES) vegetation management programs.

BACKGROUND:

Vegetation management and fire preparedness are a community and Board priority. This discussion will focus on two major components of the County's approach to vegetation management, work done by the County's Road crews on County maintained roadways and work done on private properties/roads supported by OES.

In 2024 OES completed the Nevada County Evacuation Study. The intent of the study is to improve emergency readiness in 5 communities (Alta Sierra, Greenhorn, Cascade/Banner, Lake of the Pines and Lake Wildwood), representing approximately 20,000 residents. The study identified and focused on major evacuation routes and establishes recommendations for vegetation management.

The Nevada County Department of Public Works is tasked with maintaining approximately 560 Miles of County Roads and an additional 60 miles of CSA/PRD Roads. Our road network is the County's largest capital asset, and necessary routine maintenance activities include but are not limited to road rehab prep, asphalt/road repairs, grading unpaved roads, drainage and shoulder work, bridge and culvert maintenance, storm response and cleanup, snow plowing, service requests, vegetation management, etc. All this work is done with approximately 30 full time employees, divided into five crews (one for each road district). Additionally, it is worth noting that many of the roads within the maintained mileage system are unpaved (30%), don't meet minimum fire standards (40%), or have little to no shoulders (85%).

As highlighted above, there are many challenges, competing priorities and limited resources (funding/staffing/equipment) that go into maintaining our road network. Seasonality is also a major factor, for example peak summer months are prime Asphalt/Road repair season, i.e. when asphalt plants are operating, and it is generally too hot to safely clear vegetation. During peak winter months we are generally dealing with snow and storm response and cleanup. This means we get most of our vegetation clearing work done in spring and fall months, while we are concurrently working on shoulders, grading,

bridge/culvert repairs, road rehab prep, etc. This means we generally have about two-three months of focused vegetation clearing with some spot opportunities during the winter months weather permitting. This amounts to approximately 25 road miles (50 lane miles) per year using our road crews. Additionally, we have been able to leverage several grants since 2021, which has/will allowed us to add an additional 300 miles to our program utilizing contractors.

PROPOSED DIRECTION:

In order to address vegetation management concerns and maximize our effectiveness utilizing our existing resources, we have developed a road maintenance action plan which includes:

- Align road crew and contractor efforts with priorities and routes identified in the Evacuation Study
 - Road Crews will focus on 100 miles over the next 4 years
 - Additionally, we plan to contract approximately 50 miles per year using road funds.
- Purchase necessary equipment to replace our aging fleet
- Contract out our spring spray program (we will continue to outreach no spray agreements)
- Improve transparency by making our multiyear plan available online
- Continue to leverage grant funding whenever possible
- Enhance coordination with OES

There are approximately 1,500 miles of privately maintained roads, outside of the County’s maintained mileage system with similar challenges throughout the County. OES programs aim to address the nexus of hazardous vegetation and evacuation concerns in a way that is complementary of the work already being done by the Department of Public Works. In 2025, OES has three key projects designed to address roadside vegetation and improve evacuation outcomes for Nevada County residents: free green waste events, critical evacuation hazardous vegetation removal along private roads using USFS grant funds, and hazardous vegetation removal along USFS roads using CWRRP grant funds.

DISCUSSION POINTS:

Staff is proposing an action plan based on existing funding and staffing resources. For discussion purposes below we evaluate various options and potential cost implications to increase our capacity.

Public Works Approach Models		Description	Est. Cost Implications
1	Proposed Program	Implement Roads Action Plan	No change in cost
2	5 Year Maintenance Cycle	Contract 40 additional miles Per Year	\$220,000 Per Year
3	Additional Staffing	Crew dedicated to Veg management and necessary equipment.	\$800,000 Per Year labor/overhead; \$1,000,000 up front equipment cost