

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cutline for attached photo below

Beauty just one of the benefits of KDOT's roadside management policy

Colorful wildflowers now flourishing alongside Kansas highways are showy evidence of the Kansas Department of Transportation's roadside management policy.

But the hidden benefits of the state's policy are pretty impressive, too.

In 2008, KDOT staff and partners from conservation groups and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks formed the Roadside Vegetation Task Force to develop a better way to manage the more than 150,000 acres of state-owned highway right-of-way. The resulting policy not only saves money and fuel, it enhances roadside beauty by encouraging the growth of native grasses and wildflowers.

"Together we've developed a wiser approach to roadside management, we've found a way to stretch KDOT's maintenance budget and we now have guidelines that will enhance the natural beauty of our state," said KDOT's Northeast Kansas District Engineer Clay Adams, who led the task force.

Some of the important changes under the new policy include:

- Seed mixes on new road projects include more native plants and wildflowers. And contractors are required to use only certified mulch to ensure weeds aren't spread along with the seed mix.
- Reduced mowing. This helps reduce fuel costs and more. Fence-to-fence mow-outs of the full right-of-way are done only once every four years and timed so the mowing doesn't interfere with late fall wildflower seed

propagation. In addition, mowers make only one pass on shoulders and let the grass grow to 12 inches before cutting.

- Contractors are required to strip and store top soil removed during construction. Replacing the top soil helps re-establish native plants and controls erosion.

“As a result of these and other practices, we’ve reduced maintenance costs, provided erosion control, taken advantage of the vegetation’s natural filtration system and beautified our highways,” said Scott Shields, a KDOT environmental scientist.

Among the roadside wildflowers now in bloom are pink evening primrose, purple rose verbena, white and yellow ox-eye daisy and yellow Missouri primrose. To identify wildflowers and grasses growing along state highways, visit the Kansas Wildflowers and Grasses website at www.kswildflower.org

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CUTLINE FOR ATTACHED PHOTO

Pink evening primrose is in full bloom on Interstate 70 near the East Topeka Kansas Turnpike interchange. *(Photo was shot May 5 by the Kansas Department of Transportation)*

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