

Respecting Vegetation

Roadside vegetation management is one of the largest expenditures of the RCKC budget. Trees are part of what makes Kalamazoo County beautiful, so the RCKC is committed to only removing and managing vegetation that has the potential to affect roads and/or safety of the traveling public.

Tree and Woody Vegetation Control is the RCKC's annual effort to control roadside brush and overhanging tree branches. This is limited to only trees and brush that could obstruct motorists' vision, create drainage obstacles, or cause snow and icing problems if left unchecked. The RCKC will also respond to service requests related to trees falling in the road or potential for falling. Otherwise, trees are only removed where necessary.

www.kalamazooountyroads.com/upload/resources/94/Tree%20and%20Woody%20Vegetation%20Brochure.pdf

The RCKC also employs a Natural Beauty Roads Program aimed to preserve, in a natural, essentially undisturbed condition, certain county-local roads having outstanding or unusual natural beauty by native vegetation and other natural features within or associated with the right-of-way (ROW).



The RCKC is regulated by Federal and State environmental regulations as applicable.



RCKC Sustainability & Environmental Initiatives



The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County (RCKC) is committed in policies and in practice to being good environmental stewards. The following brochure contains examples of ways the RCKC have invested positively in environmental practices over the years.

CONNECT WITH US



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Recycled Materials

The RCKC is committed to recycling and re-using as many materials as possible. One way that the RCKC recycles is use of recycled asphalt. Asphalt is actually one of the world's most recycled materials! The U.S. highway community recycles more than 81 percent of all asphalt back into highway use.



Innovation

The RCKC is committed to seeking opportunities for improved environmental practices in all aspects of our work. An example includes: the RCKC has participated in Rubber Modified Chip Seal Trials in recent years. This innovative process:

- Recycles end of life tires - reduces tire waste in landfills
- Reduces carbon footprint – recycles existing materials rather than mining new material
- Is durable and flexible – increases the life of a road, and therefore the amount of energy and materials used on that road.



Water Protection

Most storm sewer systems are comprised of drainage structures and piping which carry rainwater and snow melt to containment areas allowing runoff water to infiltrate and/or evaporate. Without proper controls, storm sewers can also contribute to soil erosion and sedimentation of our lakes, rivers and streams as well as carry pollutants. Steps RCKC takes to protect our water include:

- Installing rock riprap at the outlets of storm sewers to minimize erosion.
- Utilizing native seeding along areas of the roadside to increase storm water infiltration.
- Conducting sweeping throughout the year and following operations in order to reduce pollutant runoff.
- RCKC holds a Michigan Authorized Public Agencies permit and Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit from EGLE (Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) to reduce the discharge of pollutants to surface waters of the State.”
- RCKC partnered with neighboring agencies to participate in educational campaigns with the goal of engaging the community about everyone’s part in protecting our water. www.protectyourwater.net



Wildlife Protection

Road systems cut through the habitats of all wildlife, and it is the responsibility of the RCKC to minimize the effect this may have on native species. The RCKC must balance maintenance of infrastructure with animal protection. The RCKC also schedules projects based on the migration patterns of specific bat species. Road commissions must follow guidelines as a part of road projects that involve tree cutting or work on bridge decks in order to protect native species.



Winter Maintenance

Over the years road agencies have taken many steps to reduce the use of salt. Reducing salt/chloride serves the dual purpose of both reducing environmental impact, as well as increasing cost efficiency. The RCKC moderates salt use by:

- Using rate controllers on each winter maintenance vehicle, allowing for calculated and deliberate salt usage, and assuring limited over/under application.
- A sand/salt mixture is used on local roads (approximately 1/3 salt to 2/3 sand) allowing for use of less salt, while creating traction.
- Treating the salt/sand with deicer, and some roads when the conditions are right. Deicer increases the melting capability at lower temperatures, and reduces the bounce and scatter of salt when applied to the road, ultimately allowing for a lighter, more effective application of salt.