



As you may know, NSTAR Electric and Gas intends to selectively apply herbicides along power line rights-of-way in Wellfleet. The herbicide treatment will be conducted as a component of their integrated vegetation management program. While all of the herbicides selected for this program are registered by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Massachusetts Pesticide Board and authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, Massachusetts Pesticide Bureau, and the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, the Town of Wellfleet still has a great deal of reservations about this type of application in our community. Our main concern continues to be the protection of our sole drinking water aquifer. We are also very aware that chemicals can persist in our very sandy soils and that they have the potential to enter the surface and groundwater from which you, our residents obtain their potable water.

Since June of 2009, Town of Wellfleet staff have been meeting diligently amongst themselves and with members of the NSTAR community, Cape Cod Commission, Town representatives from Orleans, Eastham, and Truro, and various State Representatives. Despite all of these meetings, we have yet to come up with a perfect solution as NSTAR maintains that this work is absolutely necessary and sanctioned by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) because unmanaged vegetation growing near power lines can damage electric facilities and cause problems with public safety, power supply, access, emergency service restoration, security, and lines of sight. It also has the ability to compromise compliance with environmental, legal, regulatory, and other requirements. In light of the effect that vegetation- power line conflicts can have on public safety and service reliability, utilities such as NSTAR are required to control vegetation growing in proximity to their electric facilities.

NSTAR desires to use herbicide now to prevent future interventions. They believe that when properly used, these chemicals are effective and efficient, they minimize disturbance to the soil that would be created by mechanical removal, they have the ability to enhance plant and wildlife diversity by improving forage as well as escape and nesting cover that mechanical removal can not, and they can better control individual plants that are prone to re-sprout or sucker after they have been mowed or clipped. It is the suckering and re-sprouting that is of most concern to NSTAR. When woody vegetation is allowed to re-sprout and sucker they form dense thickets that impede access, increase work loads, increase costs, and block lines of site. They feel that treating with herbicides early will allow early successional, compatible species to dominate the right of way and out compete incompatible species, ultimately reducing their work load.

The Town of Wellfleet understands NSTAR's reasoning but disagrees with their approach. This being said our disagreement stems from the fact that herbicides can carry environmental risks due to drift, leaching, and volatilization even with the individual stem treatment that is proposed.

In the absence of an agreement from NSTAR to not spray the right-of-way in Wellfleet the best the Town can do is hope that by eliminating the woody species on the easement there could be a marked reduction in the amount of herbicides applied. This is not a recommendation, just a course of action residents may choose to take on their own properties. Hand removal of all woody shrubs and trees and their associated root systems may reduce the amount of herbicide applied to your property. Specific species to target include pines, oaks, and maples. Saplings as well as mature trees should be focused on. The following pictures illustrate the species before mentioned.



While we know this is not the perfect solution, we continue to work towards a better resolution before June 2010 when NSTAR intends to begin the herbicide application. We thank you for your letters, recognize your concerns and hope this information is helpful.