

## 7. WRPCO VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

### 7a. AESTHETIC AND WILDLIFE VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

Under its FERC license, WRPCO accepts certain responsibilities and obligations to maintain land within the project boundaries in a manner that protects environmentally sensitive habitat, provides aesthetic management of shoreline areas and ensures that land use is compatible with recreational needs and wildlife management.

As part of the plan, WRPCO will conduct and complete a comprehensive inventory of the vegetation and site characteristics in the SCA. This will include:

- *Mapping.* The actual SCA has already been electronically mapped as part of the existing Geographic Information System. However, water and ownership features will be upgraded for applications at map scales suitable for analysis of the approximate 100-foot SCA.
- *Field Data.* The field data collected will be sufficient to describe the site characteristics, forest and understory composition, and the forest size and vigor.
- *Plot Data.* In order to collect additional, objective vegetative data, plot data will be completed at each SCA. This information will be processed to provide an estimate of trees in each SCA.

There will be a focus on maintaining a vigorous forest cover and minimizing risk from high-hazard trees. The goal is to promote overall forest health in the SCA. Management will emphasize activities that will maintain or enhance the area's aesthetic, riparian, and wildlife values, along with protection of environmentally sensitive habitat. This will include, but is not limited to:

- Annual determination of priority areas for oak wilt management and eradication.
- Timber management activities and the removal of dead and diseased trees for overall forest health, i.e. oak wilt infestation.
- Forest management activities throughout the SCA, which will be determined by the funds allocated and the severity of infestation. (This could include under planting or other tree replacement activities.)
- Re-vegetation needs will be determined by WRPCO after timber management activities are complete.

## **7b. SCA PUBLIC TRAIL MANAGEMENT**

WRPCO's priority for the SCA public trail is to ensure it is appropriately located and safely maintained to protect environmentally sensitive habitat and is compatible with recreational needs and wildlife management.

The SCA public trail is a minimally improved trail that allows for safe pedestrian use. WRPCO is responsible for maintaining the SCA public trail, which runs in and through the SCA, for the use and enjoyment of the general public and adjacent Associations. The SCA public trail is for pedestrian use only; no motorized vehicles are permitted on the paths (with the exception of WRPCO vehicles necessary for maintenance or other official business). Associations may apply for a permit to use motorized vehicle for the maintenance of, and access to, WRPCO approved Association improvements within the SCA.

SCA public trail management and maintenance overview:

- The placement of wood chips on the SCA public trail is not necessary; although wood chips may be placed on the trail by WRPCO at its discretion.
- WRPCO may remove dead or diseased and dangerous trees that could inhibit pedestrian use of the SCA public trail.
- Maintenance of personal access paths (approved adjacent property owner paths that lead to the SCA public trail), or stairs that lead to docks or paths that go directly to docks, are the responsibility of the Association.
- Maintenance of improvements granted in the easement agreement (i.e. stairways, docks, and security lights) are the responsibility of the Association. Beaches approved in the easement agreement will be maintained by WRPCO in a manner that provides safe public use. If the Association would like to maintain a WRPCO approved beach, WRPCO will work with the Association to construct agreements to allow such activities.

## **7c. SCHEDULE FOR SCA PUBLIC TRAIL AND VEGETATION MANAGEMENT**

Under the current procedures, WRPCO conducts at a minimum, a bi-annual review of the SCA, which includes the SCA public trails and overall forest health of the SCA.

Following these reviews, and in consultation with WRPCO maintenance crews, schedules are established to meet the needs of SCA public trail maintenance requirements.

Forest type, vegetation condition and the infestation of oak wilt on the SCA differ throughout the 29 miles of SCA. These varying conditions result in differing maintenance needs.

For example, some trails have more downed trees because of over-mature jack pine and weakened oak wilt infested trees, which results in an increased rate of blow over. Some areas are more open, with sandy soil and drought conditions resulting in slow growth.

- WRPCO will continue to establish flexible schedules for routine maintenance of the SCA public trail based on these varying conditions, as well as seasonal conditions that may require adjustments to the schedule (i.e. extreme weather).
- In order to best address needs and changing conditions, WRPCO will determine which SCA public trail maintenance work is immediate and which can be handled over time.
- If applicable, WRPCO will respond to public notifications regarding SCA public trail maintenance requirements.
- The majority of SCA public trails have been surveyed for archeological features, as required prior to stump removal. Additional surveys will be conducted as needed.
- In 2006, WRPCO began stump removal from SCA public trails. This effort will continue on an as-needed basis.

#### **7d. HAZARDOUS TREE REMOVAL GUIDELINES**

Hazardous trees are those trees which are dead or diseased and are creating a danger to the safe use and enjoyment of project lands. Individual property owners and/or Associations may request, in writing, to have hazardous trees removed from within the SCA. All requests will be reviewed by WRPCO, in accordance with the following procedures:

- The individual property owner must mark the tree(s) to be removed with blue ribbon. A WRPCO representative will visit the site and review the request to determine if the tree is considered dead or diseased and creating a danger. If the tree meets the criteria, the WRPCO representative will mark the base of the tree with spray paint. The tree will be removed within an appropriate timeframe. The WDNR oak wilt restrictions (April 15<sup>th</sup> – July 1<sup>st</sup>) are generally observed, but can be waived for emergency tree removal process.
- On site visits to review tree removal requests will be conducted on an ad hoc basis and do not require the attendance of the property owner.
- WRPCO will make a reasonable effort to contact the property owner prior to, and upon completion, of tree removal activities.

- The standard procedure for removing a hazardous tree will be for WRPCO to cut the tree down at the base and then cut the tree trunk into manageable lengths. The trunk, limbs and resulting brush should be placed in piles not more than one (1) foot in height from ground level per aesthetic forest management procedures. Tree limbs may be removed from the SCA by the adjacent property owners.
- Timber cut by WRPCO may be salvaged by the adjacent property owner(s) for their personal use. Prior to salvaging any downed timber, a permit must be acquired from WRPCO for the Association.
- If the tree is not deemed hazardous by WRPCO, the property owner will be informed that the tree did not meet the criteria. Future forest management activities could result in that tree being removed.
- Property owner marking instructions for review of possible hazardous trees are included in the SCA Development Application Guidelines and Instructions, provided as Appendix A.