

# Benefits of Native Plant Restoration

Iowa Code 314.22 states that it is “in the general public welfare of Iowa and a highway purpose for the vegetation of Iowa’s roadsides to be preserved, planted, and maintained to be safe, visually interesting, ecologically integrated, and useful for many purposes.” Counties may choose to adopt integrated roadside vegetation management plans that describe how the county will manage roadsides in an ecologically integrated manner. Planting native plants as part of this plan benefits both the public and the environment.

## Attractive roadsides

According to a survey, twice as many Iowans prefer the look of roadsides planted with native grasses, wildflowers and trees compared to mowed roadsides that have a park-like appearance.

## Habitat for butterflies, bees and birds

Roadsides with native grasses and wildflowers provide better habitat for butterflies, bees and birds than roadsides with non-native grasses such as smooth brome and fescue.

## Water quality

Taller vegetation in roadsides slows down water runoff from rain, allowing water to infiltrate into the soil. Water quality is improved as fine sediments and pollutants are filtered through deep native plant roots.



## Benefits of a County Roadside Manager and IRVM Plan

A county roadside manager is someone with expertise in native plant restoration who can spot spray weeds, spot mow, control brush and plant natives. It is often more efficient to have this single point of contact who is familiar with all of the county’s roadside vegetation and is dedicated to implementing a county IRVM plan than to contract out roadside management. The plan helps a county apply a focused, organized approach to managing roadsides in a cost-effective manner that also benefits the environment.



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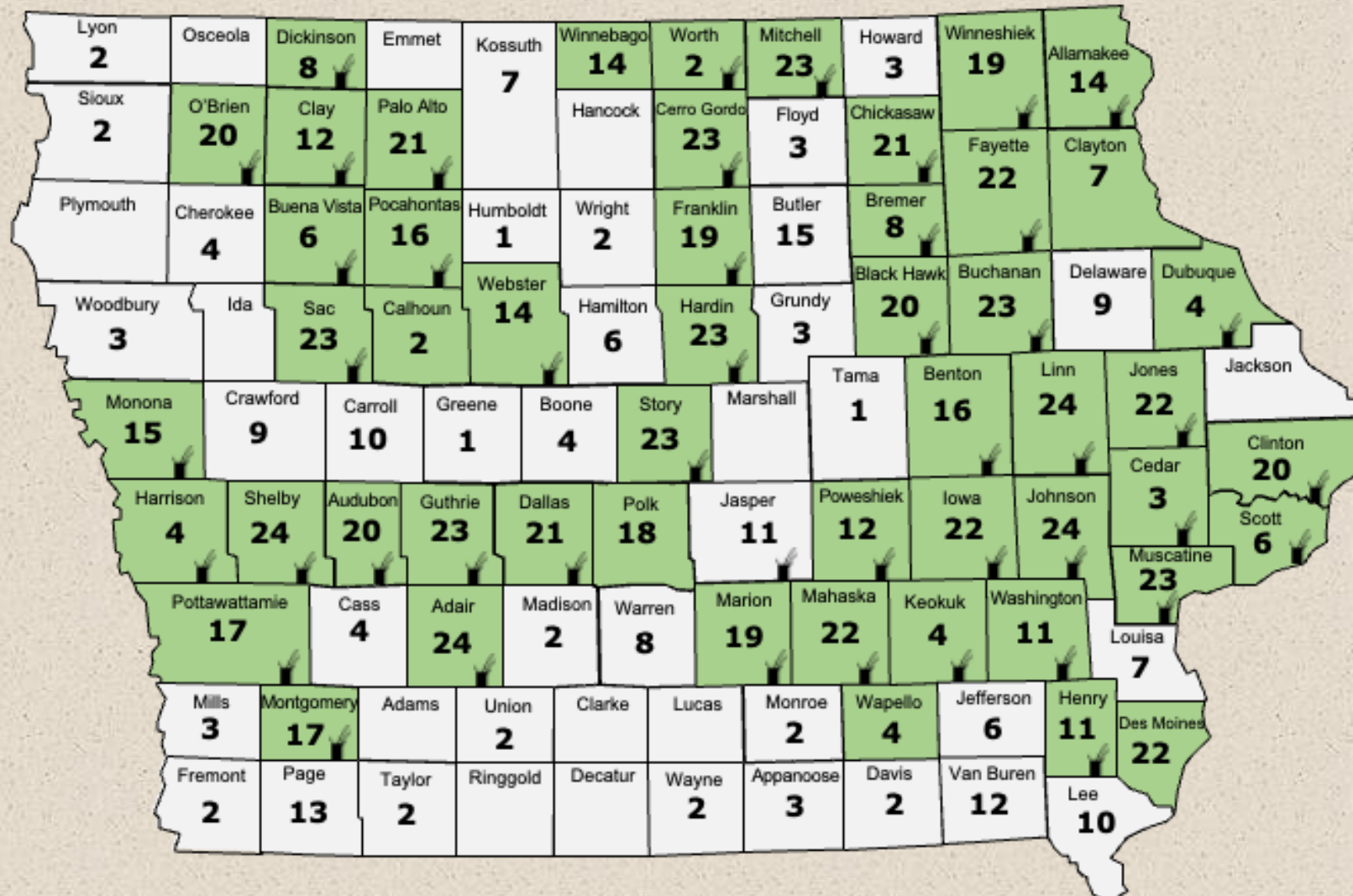
# Iowa County Roadside Programs

Since 1998, 87 counties have received native grass and wildflower seed mixes through the Transportation Alternatives Program or similar Federal Highway Administration programs. The counties receive the seed for free in exchange for providing the labor and equipment to plant it. The University of Northern Iowa roadside office administers the seed purchase.

As of 2021, 54 counties had integrated roadside vegetation management (IRVM) plans on file with the Iowa DOT, allowing these counties to apply for funding for equipment and roadside inventories through the Living Roadway Trust Fund. Forty-four counties had a roadside manager who is dedicated to implementing IRVM.



## COUNTY INVOLVEMENT WITH NATIVE ROADSIDE VEGETATION



NUMBER = # of years each county has received FHWA native seed mixes, 1998-2021

= Roadside vegetation manager    = IRVM plan on file with Iowa DOT Living Roadway Trust Fund

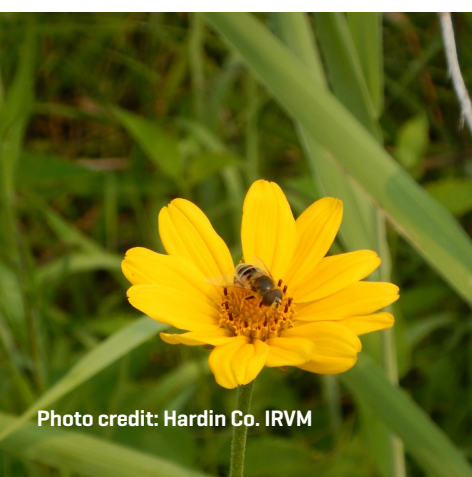


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