

GENERAL
MANAGERBRAD
BIERSTEDT

Managing Rights-of-Way From Top to Bottom

THERE'S MORE THAN one way to look at vegetation management. The work Karnes Electric Cooperative and our contractors do to help keep electric lines and other equipment separated from plant overgrowth plays a major role in service reliability.

From mowing and brush work at ground level to tree trimming near and above power lines, we regularly inspect and manage the landscape in and around our equipment to prevent outages, minimize the threat of fire damage, and maintain access and serviceability.

Utility providers, including electric cooperatives, have worked with local, state and federal foresters to develop integrated vegetation management prac-

agement, electric co-ops and other utilities regularly conduct maintenance to mitigate risks.

Vegetation management that's deferred one year has to be done in the future, and the cost accrues much faster than inflation. As biomass increases and trees encroach on—or even engulf—power lines, they become increasingly difficult to access and less safe to work on.

While the heavy lifting might be done with rotary cutters, mowers and chain saws, electric co-ops also rely heavily upon planning, seeding and strategic plantings. We regularly share information and updates on local vegetation management efforts to keep the public safe and communicate how tree and

plant growth trimming increases service reliability.

Communication is indispensable to successful vegetation management programs. We regularly communicate with our members to help them understand how vegetation management will benefit them, including education on how a vegetation management program minimizes the risk of tree-caused power outages.

According to industry research, about 20%–30% of power outages are vegetation related. Removal of tall trees and limbs near power

lines also reduces the risk of injuries caused by accidental contacts with energized power lines.

The concept of right tree, right place helps guide our vegetation management plan and doesn't leave room for tall trees to develop under power lines. Planting trees under lines means those trees cannot reach their full potential and will have to be either removed or, if retained, continually pruned to keep them clear of the conductors.

Karnes EC appreciates the diversity and beauty of the Texas landscape and is committed to vegetation management practices that provide the right balance of reliable electric service, harmony with nature and safety. ■



MIDSOUTH EC

tices aimed at reducing the need for chemicals, costly manual and mechanical control measures, and controlled burning. These techniques establish low-growing vegetation that out-compete taller-growing species.

The Environmental Protection Agency worked with utility industry associations and other federal agencies to develop vegetation management practices that can help create sustainable ecosystems such as meadow transition habitats. The techniques, used for roadside and cross-country rights-of-way, encourage the growth of native species and increase plant diversity. They also create or restore habitat for local and migrating wildlife, including insects, birds and mammals.

While weather can affect seasonal activities related to right-of-way work and vegetation man-