



Living Snow Fences in Minnesota

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

State-wide, Minnesota



The State of Minnesota - The State has taken a pro-active role in providing some relief to communities that encounter blowing and drifting snow, resulting in hazardous travel, economic losses, and extremely high plowing costs in the winter.

The State has developed a Living Snow Fence Task Force to address the issue of unsafe winter driving conditions and provide the State with an active group to mitigate the dangerous blowing and drifting snow. The living snow fences consist of indigenous vegetation, including trees and shrubs, planted along main roads and highways to buffer the damaging effects of wind and blowing snow.

The Task Force members include State agencies such as the Division of Emergency Management, the Department of Transportation, the Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR), Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, and the University of Minnesota Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management. In addition to the Task Force being developed, the State Legislature has approved \$100,000 for BWSR to fund more living snow fence projects. Other State agencies are providing funds in the way of local matches. The Department of Transportation is providing the 25 percent local match on all their projects.

Funding has been approved to address approximately 150 living snow fence sites, equating to approximately 36 miles, to reduce the threat of dangerous snowdrifts across roads and highways. Twenty counties have snow fence projects underway, including the following: Blue Earth, Brown, Clay, Kittson, Lincoln, Lyon, Marshall, Murray, Nicollet, Olmsted, Pipestone, Polk, Redwood, Renville, Roseau, Sibley, Steele, Traverse, Wilkin, and Wright. In addition to the above counties, there have been 15 new applications totaling \$850,000 being reviewed by the Task Force for future funding. The subgrantees vary in each project but usually involve the Department of Transportation or the local Soil and Water Conservation District.

Living snow fences are an extremely economical, effective, and environmentally sound alternative for controlling snow. Properly placed living snow fences can significantly reduce the costs to taxpayers for snow removal and improve the driving conditions for motorists.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **State-wide**

FEMA Region: **Region V**

State: **Minnesota**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Winter Storm**
Activity/Project Type: **Vegetation Management**
Activity/Project Start Date: **05/1998**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP)**
Funding Recipient: **Local Government**
Funding Recipient Name: **Various statewide**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **\$2,067,402.00 (Estimated)**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **No**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: <http://www.fema.gov/>
Reference URL 2: <http://www.epcra.state.mn.us/>

Main Points

- The State has developed a Living Snow Fence Task Force to address the issue of unsafe winter driving conditions and provide the State with an active group to mitigate the dangerous blowing and drifting snow.
- Properly placed living snow fences can significantly reduce the costs to taxpayers for snow removal and improve the driving conditions for motorists.
- Funding has been approved to address approximately 150 living snow fence sites, equating to approximately 36 miles, to reduce the threat of dangerous snowdrifts across roads and highways.