

# Raft Island Right-of-Way Vegetation and Tree Management Plan

October 13, 2010

## Introduction

With the advent of underground utilities executed on the Island some 10 years ago, cessation of power line right of way clearing and maintenance created a general lack of maintenance for our roadway's vegetation and tree growth. Since that time, the right of way for many of our road ways paths and right-of-ways has been encroached to the point where the usable roadway allows only single car access or prevents the use of some of our designated pathways. Driving, jogging, and strolling on our roadways has become difficult and in many areas clearly unsafe or impossible due to the encroaching vegetation and tree growth. Drivers not familiar with the island turns and roadway intersections many times get lost due to obscured street signs or overgrown roadways. It is apparent that regular right of way vegetation and tree clearing necessary to prevent accidents or loss of life due to poor visibilities needs to be managed. In many areas, designated paths have overgrown to such an extent that they are not known to many. Recently, poorly maintained vegetation and trees have encroached or fallen on our roadways, preventing passage of any vehicle, creating potential life threatening situations should emergency vehicle traffic need to pass or falling on the unsuspecting passersby.

The goal of the roadway vegetation and tree management plan is to preserve the natural beauty and environmental integrity of our right-of-way while providing a safe and efficient road system.

## Right-of-Way and Road Surface Designation

The roadway right-of-way width varies from location to location sometime by tens of feet. In general, for our entire road system, the trees and vegetation within a few feet of the roadway are located within the right-of-way, need to be trimmed back to allow safe passage. The road system on Raft Island is clearly outlined on the Raft Island Plot map as shown in Appendix I.

Over the years the environment, vehicle use, construction and landscaping projects have altered the original width of our roads. Road drainage has filled with debris and vegetative growth encroached onto the roadway in many cases preventing clear delineation of the road way, its shoulders and right-or-way. Where road surface and shoulders are not clearly visible, areas will be delineated within reasonable limits from where the road and shoulder areas are clearly visible.

### **From Raft Island's COVENANTS, CONDITIONS, AND RESTRICTIONS:**

#### ***ARTICLE V: Maintenance and Utility Easements***

*(b) Renovation and repair of the walkway easements located along the following Lots: Lots 18, 20, 22, and 24; Lots 60, 62, 64, and 66; and Lots 94, 96, 98, and 100*

#### ***ARTICLE VI: Protective Covenants***

*(d) Set-backs and Sight Distances. No structure of any type, fence, wall, hedge or shrub planting may be placed or permitted to remain closer to the Raft Island roads than is permissible under the Pierce County Zoning Code and Building Ordinance, nor shall any*

*structure, fence, wall, hedge or shrub planting be placed in such a manner that it obstructs sight lines along roads in a manner impermissible under Pierce County Code requirements regarding road approach distances and stopping distances.*

## **Vegetation Management**

Vegetation and trees along roadways can pose a public nuisance and/or poses a risk to pedestrian or vehicular safety. Managing our right-of-way vegetation and trees reduce soil erosion, stabilize roadsides, and are aesthetically pleasing without compromising vehicle operations.

Many properties have vegetation, privacy hedges or other such plantings that are well maintained but at many different distances from the roadway. It is important to have the right-of-ways along the shoulder of the roadway clear of vegetation and debris to allow the safe passage of vehicles in both directions and allow proper drainage. This would include line of site of our street signs, proper clearance of existing overhead electrical lines, corner visibility, mail boxes and address signs.

If you are considering landscaping, the particular method(s) chosen should be based on a variety of factors to establish an easily maintainable, stable plant population that will not interfere with vehicles or pedestrians. Emphasis should be given to the control tactic that will address the vegetation problem in the most environmentally sound manner and in a way to minimize vegetation control in the long term. The method chosen for a given vegetation problem should attempt to achieve a long term, low maintenance vegetation management program, minimizing its impact on pedestrians and vehicle passage.

Roadway vegetation management involves mechanical methods (hand cutting, selective trimming and mowing). In some cases our right-of-way drainage has become filled with debris from neglect or inappropriately dumping of trimmings from other locations. In many of these cases debris has blocked roadway drainage and contaminated runoff. In some cases mowing or trimming cannot completely remove the problem debris requiring digging to remove the offensive debris or blockage. Areas which interfere with traffic, obscure signs, impede the flow of water or divert water from drainage structures are not considered maintained until the vegetation has been removed from the designated areas.

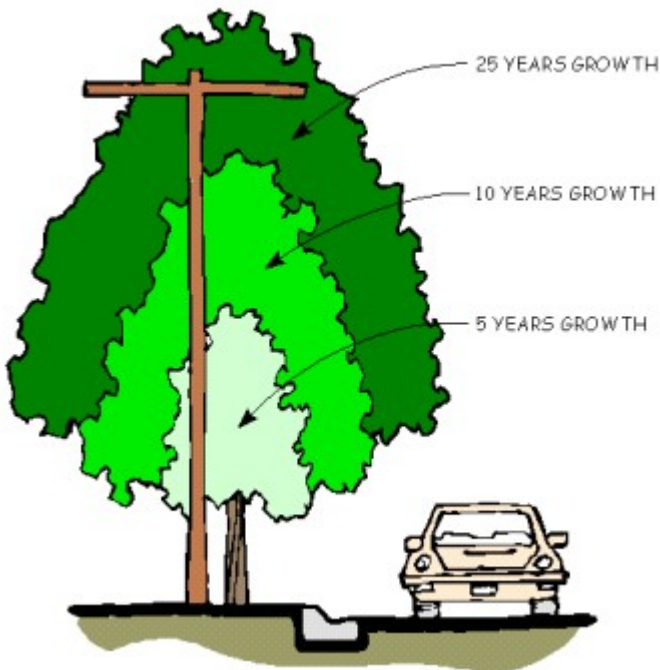
Many property owners on Raft Island already perform regular vegetation and debris removal from the right-of-ways helping in the efforts to keep our roadways safe and runoff free of contaminating debris. For those who do not currently help maintain the right-of-ways, these areas will be incorporated into the annual right-of-way vegetation management or as necessary to maintain safe conditions of our roadways and right-of-ways. Successful management of encroaching vegetation helps maintain our roadways and right-of-ways clear, allowing proper drainage, runoff and open space for safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians within our roadways. All areas being maintained will stay well within the right-of-ways as provided in the Raft Island Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions.

## Tree Management

Trees along roadways can pose a public nuisance and/or poses a risk to pedestrian or vehicular safety. Managing our right-of-way trees reduce soil erosion, stabilize roadsides, and are aesthetically pleasing without compromising vehicle operations.

Tree management, is a necessary part of providing a complete road system. The removal of dead or hazardous trees and the pruning of young trees are important. Keeping the right-of-way clear and free of hazards allow for the safe passage of vehicles, including emergency vehicles and pedestrians.

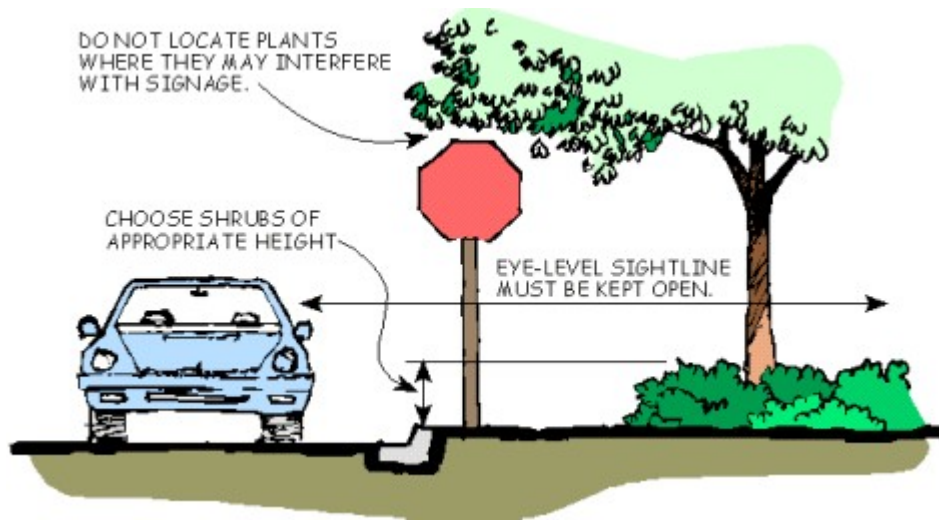
Trees should not be placed where their mature height or spread will interfere with utilities or encroach on travel lanes. Visibility of oncoming traffic is important to the safe travel of vehicles entering intersections. Visibility also applies to other safety features including road way corners, signs and driveways. Many of the Island trees have overgrown the roadway, blocked signs, prevented clear view of oncoming traffic at corners or two vehicle passage and due to lack of proper tree maintenance have encroached on existing overhead power lines. Due to personnel safety, no trimming will be performed on trees within safety zones surrounding existing overhead utility poles or lines, unless provided by the utility. It is the property owner's responsibility for seeing that proper safety zones are maintained for their existing utility poles and lines. For further information regarding overhead utilities please contact your local utility provider.



Roadway tree management will involve mechanical methods (hand cutting, selective trimming and removal) and done in accordance with the International Society of Arboriculture guidelines, taking into account such factors as trees species and growth characteristics. Many property owners on Raft Island perform regular pruning helping in the efforts to keep our roadways safe. For those who do not maintain the adjacent right-of-ways including the

overhead canopies, current management practice is necessary, trimming trees at selected areas within the road right-of-way that have fallen or obstruct the roadway. This helps maintain right-of-ways, clearing to an open space for safe movement of vehicles within our roadways. This would include line of site of our street signs, corner visibility, mail boxes and address signs. The placement of plant material in the right-of-way is of critical importance because of its potential effect on driver and pedestrian safety.

*Maintain safe sight-distances.*



To successfully manage the encroaching trees, pruning will be performed along all roadway right-of-ways. The areas being maintained will stay well within the right-of-ways as provided in the Raft Island Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions.

Street right-of-ways should have a vertical clear zone of 14 feet above the roadway to allow safe passage of vehicles including emergency vehicles. Due to the increasing volume of trees that need pruned throughout Raft Island roadways, it is not always possible for the Raft Island Management to contact each individual property owner concerned about the trimming operations. If you notice branches from trees on your property overhanging into the clear zone of the Island's right-of-way, you may want to consider having these trees trimmed yourself or by an arborist of your choice, else they may be trimmed as noted above.

In part due to poor maintenance, hazardous trees exist within the Raft Island's right-of-ways. A hazard tree is defined as a tree that has structural defects in the roots, stem, or branches that may cause the tree or tree part to fail, where such failure may cause personal injury or property damage (target). A defect may be caused by an injury or disease. These trees need to be removed before they cause bodily injury and prevent vehicle passage.

## **Summary**

While certainly lack of regular maintenance has led to some of the problems, and the growing numbers of trees and vegetation have impacted our roads and right-of-ways, many improvements have been made by many of the Island residences. Trees along roadways can pose a public nuisance and/or poses a risk to pedestrian or vehicular safety. Managing our

right-of-way vegetation and trees reduce soil erosion, stabilize roadsides, and are aesthetically pleasing without compromising vehicle operations.

While we would all prefer it to be otherwise, the roadside is not a kind place for vegetation or trees and, quite frankly, we are fortunate to have so many trees that are in as good of a condition as they are. Still, we do strive for more and plan to see the overall health of our roadways and its right-of-ways improved.

### **General Guide for Visual Impediments to Safe Road Use**

Raft Island Property owners and Island Management should not allow any of the following things to exist on or in the road right-of-way, including intersecting corners, that abuts property s/he owns or occupies, or on property that abuts a road, or in the airspace above a road, if the thing obstructs the view necessary for safe operation of motor vehicles upon the road, or if it causes potential danger to the public that uses the road:

1. Trees;
2. Shrubs;
3. Hedges;
4. Any vegetation;
5. Projecting overhanging limbs of vegetation;
6. Temporary or permanent structures;
7. Fences;
8. Berms;
9. Natural or man-made objects.

Appendix I: Raft Island Plot  
Map

