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**A “corny” idea to keep roads safe in winter**

*Corn rows appear to be cheaper, better alternative than snow fences*

Leaving corn rows adjacent to highways may provide a safer, more inexpensive way to keep roads safe in winter.

In years past, blowing snow often resulted in drifts covering Wisconsin’s roadways, especially adjacent to open, plowed farm fields. One way highway departments attempted to reduce the chance of that happening was to put up snow fences. But that takes time, manpower, hundreds of posts, miles of snow fence, and lots of money. And that’s just to put the fencing up. The fencing also had to be taken down in the spring resulting in county highway crews spending even more time and money.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), in an effort to find a better way, observed the success of a program in Iowa that used corn rows to serve as a living snow fence throughout the winter. By leaving 8 to 16 rows of corn standing in fields parallel to highways at the end of the growing season, significant drift control was achieved along those highways during the winter.

Farmers are encouraged to contact their regional WisDOT office to determine whether they have fields in locations where drifting is a known problem. If so, farmers can sign up for the program now so they can plan to plant corn rows parallel to state highways. Farmers are paid 50 cents per bushel over the price they were paid for the crop in the year the agreement is made. Yield is determined using the previous year’s average for the highest yield per acre, per bushel by county, from Wisconsin Department of Agriculture statistical data.

Farmers can harvest the stalks and replant in the spring. Interested farmers can contact their regional WisDOT office for more information and to sign up for the program.

Office locations/phone numbers:

Southwest regional office - Madison  
2111 Wright Street  
Madison  
(608) 246-3800

Southwest regional office – La Crosse  
3550 Mormon Coulee Road  
La Crosse  
(608) 785-9958

Southeast regional office  
141 NW Barstow St.  
Waukesha  
(262) 548-5903

Northeast regional office  
944 Vanderperren Way  
Green Bay  
(920) 492-5643

North Central regional office – Wisconsin Rapids  
1681 Second Avenue South  
Wisconsin Rapids  
(715) 421-8300

North Central regional office – Rhinelander  
510 N. Hanson Lake Road  
Rhinelander  
(715) 365-3490

Northwest regional office – Eau Claire  
718 W. Clairemont Avenue  
Eau Claire  
(715) 836-2891

Northwest regional office – Superior  
1701 N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street  
Superior  
(715) 392-7925