

Company helps regenerate prairie

Native grasses seeded in transmission line corridors in C.R. area

By Orian Love, The Gazette

CEDAR RAPIDS - A program to plant native grasses in electric transmission line corridors in the Cedar Rapids area will help restore a dwindling Iowa resource - native prairies.

"It's a win for us, a win for wildlife and the environment and a win for the public, which owns the land," said Tom Petersen, communications director for ITC Midwest, the company whose electric transmission lines cross the properties.

Contractors [FDC Enterprises, Inc.] for ITC Midwest earlier this month planted native prairie plants on six acres at Beverly Park, city property in southwest Cedar Rapids; on 30 acres of city property east of Cole Street SE near the Sac and Fox Trail; and on six acres near Squaw Creek Park, east of Highway 13, on land owned by the Linn County Conservation Department.

The plantings generally extend for several hundred yards along the 100-foot-wide easements allowing ITC transmission lines to cross the public properties.

"We recognize that we have impacts on the environment and remain open to projects that help us improve that relationship," Petersen said.

The plantings, featuring native grasses, wildflowers and broadleaf native plants, should take root next year and become more prominent with each succeeding year, he said.

The native vegetation will provide wildlife habitat, especially for ground-nesting birds, and make the land more absorbent to slow runoff from heavy rains, he said.



Liz Martin/The Gazette

A crew from FDC Enterprises in Columbus, Ohio, uses a modified Kinzie planter on Dec. 5 to seed a 6-acre transmission line corridor with native prairie plants in Beverly Park in southwest Cedar Rapids. The contractors [FDC Enterprises, Inc.] for ITC Midwest also seeded 30 acres near Sac and Fox Trail and six acres near Squaw Creek Park as part of the program, which will replace invasive species with native prairie, providing habitat for small animals, birds and pollinators, and make transmission line access easier for repair crews in the future.



This week, ITC began planting native prairie plants on three Cedar Rapids-area public properties crossed by the company's electric transmission lines. Safe and reliable transmission corridors can also support stable and diverse natural greenways.

Facebook, ITC Holdings Corp.

December 5, 2014

While we watched the seeding contractors [FDC Enterprises, Inc.] work on Dec. 6, Petersen said neighbors approached to thank the company for its consideration of the environment. "It was cool to see the neighborhood appreciate the effort," he said.

Exceptionally cold November weather froze the ground and threatened to delay the seeding until next spring, but the December warm-up provided a window for the contractor [FDC Enterprises, Inc.] to drill the seed into the ground.

Petersen said native grass beneath the lines helps ensure access if repairs are needed, and well-established prairie grasses help prevent invasive trees from taking root and potentially growing into the lines and affecting electric reliability.

"These areas will help restore and maintain some natural areas that add to the quality of

life for all of us," he said.

Cedar Rapids Parks Superintendent Daniel Gibbins said the plantings fit well with the city's sustainability initiatives. Gibbins said the projects compliment and support the city's habitat improvement and watershed management goals.

ITC Midwest, with Iowa offices in Cedar Rapids, Dubuque, Iowa City and Perry, operates more than 6,660 circuit miles of transmission lines in Iowa, Minnesota, Illinois and Missouri.

