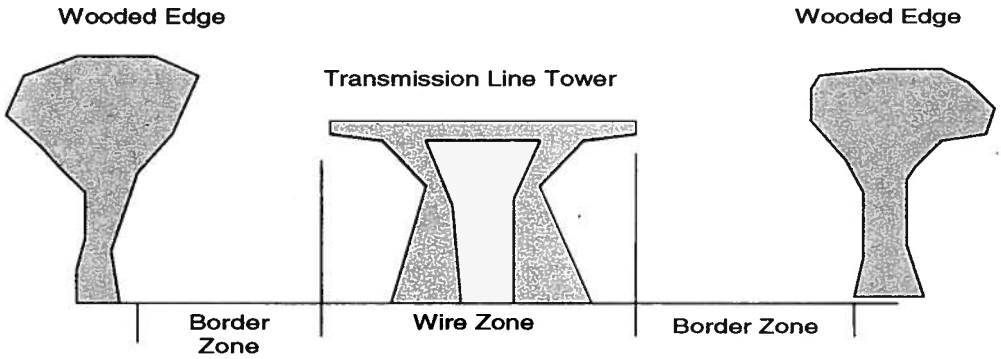
Rights-of-way Habitat Management Using Integrated Vegetation Management Techniques

Managing power line rights-of-way in the right manner can provide excellent habitat for a variety of wildlife species including numerous shrub and grassland nesting birds, small mammals, and even pollinators like butterflies, bees and other insects. The key is using an integrated vegetation management (IVM) approach. This approach can and often does include use of selective herbicides. The general public often views the use of herbicides on ROWs as detrimental to wildlife. The truth is, use of the right herbicides will increase wildlife cover, species diversity and richness (Bramble, et al. 1992, Bramble et al. 1994, Bramble et al. 1997). The key is using non-persistent, low soluble, selective herbicides that minimize environmental risk, particularly in areas of karst, or limestone, bedrock. Karst topography is generally more of an issue in the mountains and western piedmont of Virginia.

When using IVM, a power line is divided into zones with the wire zone in the middle being the portion of the ROW directly under the transmission lines and the border zones being both edges not directly under the wire.



The key components of IVM include, scouting the line to be managed, inventorying the vegetative community, determining undesirable species presence, (primarily species that will grow into tall woody vegetation such as red maple, sweetgum, tall oak varieties, pines, poplar, and others), determining how to control the species, developing a plan and implementing it.