

# TAKING A TOLL

Tolls from the Ohio Turnpike take a toll on weeds and otherwise help keep the east-west byway looking sharp.

**D**anon Kramp and Dan Castrigano have the best of both worlds. They not only are responsible for maintaining 241.2 miles of roadside vegetation, they also have a nice budget—a total of \$20 million—to do it with.

How do they come by so much financing? Because the road they maintain happens to be the Ohio Turnpike, a smartly-kept toll road through northern Ohio that joins on the east with I-80 in Pennsylvania and on the west with the Indiana Toll Road.

They've divided the highway into eight zones of about 30 miles. Each zone uses three or four tractor units, Brouwer five-gang reel mowers that have 11-foot swaths, and 30 employees.

Castrigano, with the Ohio Turnpike Commission since 1982, says, "We mow before the grass is six inches high. That means an average of 11 to 13 mowings per year.

"We pride ourselves on the appearance of the zones. We're trying to have a golf course fairway look on the medians."

Among the herbicides they use to try and control growth are PBI-Gordon's Embark plus 2,4-D and Mon-

santo's Manage plus Du Pont's Oust. They're thinking about testing Du Pont's Telar, with which Indiana and Michigan have had good results. The Embark/2,4-D combination was applied in early May last year. "We were fairly pleased with what we saw," admits Castrigano, "no growth until September."

Augmenting the PGR applications

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and mowing are applications of Spike and Surflan from Elanco Products for weed control under guardrails, which they have used since 1981. Du Pont's Krovar may be tested soon.

This spring, they planned to implement herbicide spraying on shoulder and back slopes at interchanges. (They define shoulder slopes as "asphalt to ditch" and back slopes as "ditch to fence.")

Most herbicide applications are

contracted, but hydroseeding jobs aren't. The O.T.C. has two large 1200-gallon hydroseeders that it uses.

Gravelly tractors are used to mow around service plazas and ramps to the plazas. All plazas are treated with insecticides and Vertac's Dowpon M broadleaf weed control. During the summer, college students are also hired for weeding at plazas and interchanges.

Kramp and Castrigano work well together. She with a degree from Ohio State University in horticulture, and he with a degree from the University of Toledo in civil engineering. She on the road most of the time (68,000 miles in the last two years) and he behind the desk (except for special maintenance projects). And both enjoy what they do.

"I'm not a desk person," claims Kramp, who is a certified pesticide applicator in Ohio, like two other O.T.C. employees. "I like being outside."

"I enjoy my job," adds Castrigano. "I get involved in a lot of different aspects of highway management."

One of the biggest problems they encounter are cattails in ditches. They have used Monsanto's Roundup in the past, and are considering testing Rodeo. Another is plumegrass in ditches and slopes where there's a lot of moisture. Dowpon is used, but is sometimes ineffective.

Of the \$20 million budgeted the department, about five percent is used on mowing and spraying. Another 10 percent is used for control of snow and ice, which is a heady problem in this part of the country.

Pre-treated sodium is used when the snow falls: solid sodium chloride with liquid calcium chloride, which works more effectively in lower temperatures. All winter, weather reports are monitored six times a day. When a possible snowfall exists, crews are halved with each crew on duty 12 hours a day.

"With a heavy snow, we actually put some men up in hotels close to the turnpike," notes Castrigano. "There are no complaints. We have dedicated employees; when we have a heavy snow, they rise to the occasion." **LM**



Danon Kramp and Dan Castrigano are the Ohio Turnpike Commission's version of "Ms. Outside and Mr. Inside."