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Using Utility Lands for Pollinators and Wildlife

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MD-DC Utility Association – 2016 Environmental Conference

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Wildlife Habitat Council

We promote and certify habitat conservation and management on corporate lands through partnerships and education.

Support corporate
conservation

Recognize
conservation
achievements

Talk about efforts
and outcomes



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Habitat
Council
Corporate
Members



Corporate Conservation

Habitat restoration



Species management



Education



12/13/2012

Benefits to companies & communities

Risk Reduction

Government relations

Community relations

Permitting

Social license to operate

Corporate Social Responsibility

Positive biodiversity outcomes

Sustainability driver & metrics

Employee engagement/morale

NGO & community partnership



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Pollinators 101

- ~200,000 animal species act as pollinators
 - Bees, butterflies, moths, hummingbirds, beetles, wasps, flies...
- Vital to our world's health and economy
 - Contribute to 35% of world food production
 - Pollinate plants needed for medicines, spices, beverages, and natural fibers
 - Provide services and products valued at \$40 billion annually in U.S. alone



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Pollinators 101

Pollinators are in decline worldwide due to:

- Habitat loss and degradation
- Decreasing floral diversity
- Pesticide misuse
- Disease
- Climate change

Pollinator conservation priorities

- White House National Pollinator Strategy
- State Wildlife Action Plans
- State/local pollinator initiatives
- Citizen science and research programs



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Pollinators 101

What do pollinators need?

- Native plants
 - Nectar producing plants
 - Larval host plants
- Water sources
- Basking/resting areas



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Pollinator conservation

- Build a native garden
- Plant a native grassland/prairie
- Supplement habitats with nectar sources and/or larval host plants (e.g., milkweed)
- Conduct restoration with native pollinator-friendly seed mix
- Adapt or minimize pesticide use
- Provide learning opportunities
- Contribute to pollinator research



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Powerline ROWs alone have the potential to provide 5M acres of pollinator habitat

Pollinators and ROWs

ROWs can be an ideal operational context for pollinator habitat enhancement

- Sunny, low-growing vegetation
- Spans multiple ecosystems & connects habitats

Many utilities are developing ROW maintenance practices that preserve pollinator habitat while meeting operational needs



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What does this look like?

- Conversion of small patches or larger segments of ROW lands to pollinator habitat
 - Planting low-growing native grasses & wildflowers
 - Managing invasive vegetation using IVM
- Public education and/or research on pollinators
 - Partnerships with community groups, NGOs, land trusts



Exelon – BGE – ROW Stewardship Program

- Two locations in Howard County, MD
- ~40 acres managed as habitat
- Serve as pilot sites for IVM
 - Focuses on use of IVM to control invasive species and restore native early-successional plant communities to provide habitat for wildlife & pollinators
 - Work with USGS to document value to native bees



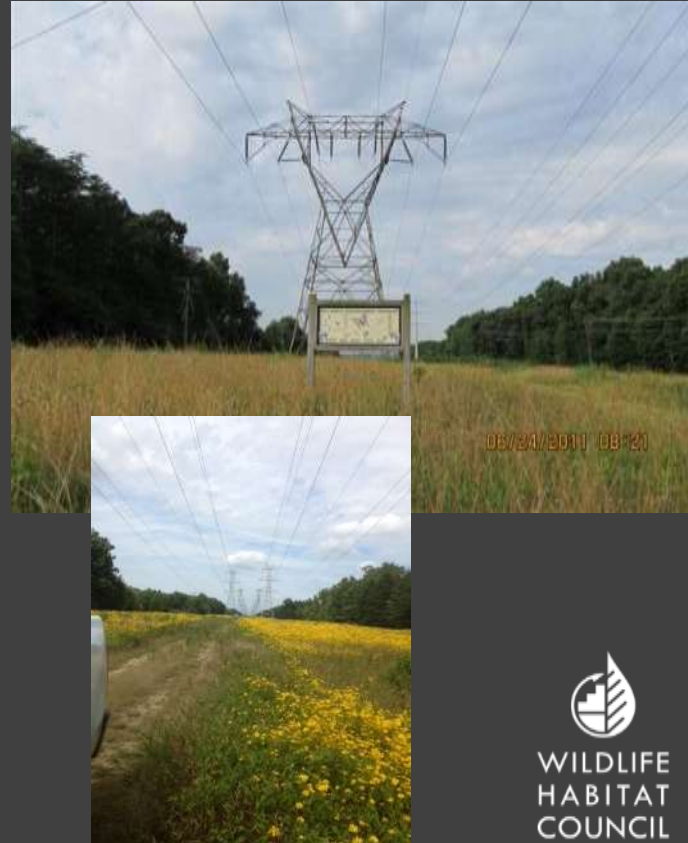
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Exelon – PEPCO – Transmission ROW

- DC metro area
- 3-acre stretch in Montgomery County maintained as enhanced area for butterflies
 - Tree removal and native plantings
 - Partner with Washington Area Butterfly Club & International Butterfly Breeders Association to introduce butterfly nectar and larval host plants
 - Information signage



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Getting Started

1. Pick a good location
2. Define your objective
3. Find a partner
4. Survey vegetation



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Common Pitfalls & Solutions

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Project scale to use when first starting | ➤ Starting with a small but winning location |
| 2. Contractors to use when starting and contractor education | ➤ Using specialized contractors when starting |
| 3. Public understanding of herbicide use | ➤ Explaining what the public should expect to see and why |
| 4. Public perception of “untidy” appearance | ➤ Mowing borders and/or providing signage (“Restoration In Progress”) |



Leveraging outcomes

- Increasing value by aligning with conservation priorities
- Earning recognition
 - WHC Conservation Certification
 - Provides third-party credibility
 - Structured tool for project design, implementation and data collection
 - Generates consistent, meaningful data and reporting



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Resources

NGOs

- Pollinator Partnership
- Xerces Society
- Pheasants Forever
- Monarch Watch
- Wildlife Habitat Council

State/local

- State extension office
- Local NRCS office
- Native plant society
- Universities
- Native nurseries

WHC Services

- Conservation program design
- Siting and routing analysis
- Recognition
- Visibility and outreach
- Making connections between companies to share BMPs

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- Project guidances
- Program checklist
- Success stories



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Thank you

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