LETTER TO THE EDITOR

To the Editor:

This letter is in reference to the excellent article in the January 2005 issue, "A Framework for Applying Integrated Vegetation Management on Rights-of-Way" by Nowak and Ballard. This outstanding article provides a scholarly yet practical benchmark for our developing knowledge utilizing IVM in ROW management nationwide.

More than 50 years ago, we thought we had all the answers in ROW management, as early accounts of the Bramble and Byrnes study on Gamelands 33 near Penn State reported at that time. However, in the interest of historical accuracy and in deference to the pioneers in IVM that I was privileged to work with, I'd like to suggest a small correction. On page 28, Dr. Frank Egler was credited with the concept of selective tree removal 50 years ago. Dr. Egler devised the concept of the U-shaped, or tailored, ROW and published on that in 1949. However, it was Bob Beatty, director of research, and Bill Allen, formulating chemist at ACP (later Amchem), working with Ralph Kauffman, manager of herbicides with Asplundh, who devised the selective basal application technique in 1948. Amchem held the original patent on 2,4-D, and those three men, working in cooperation, devised many of the techniques used today, after the early failure of "blanket sprays" in 1946.

When the uproar over alleged killing of deer and small mammals became deafening in the very early 1950s, these three men, along with the writer, planned an extensive demonstration, under the leadership of Bramble and Byrnes at Penn State. The original purpose was to show the public, hunters, environmentalists, regulators, and others that the five herbicide techniques, used according to label directions, and then replicated four times, were not only safer for wildlife, but also safer for the applicators than for workers doing manual or mechanical methods. In addition, herbicide applications actually were of benefit for many public purposes and for livestock, as well as for wildlife habitat.

Later, as reported by Dr. Rich Yahner and his associates at Penn State, these demonstrations showed conclusively that songbirds, reptiles, amphibians, and even butterflies thrived on the ROW, when compared to their populations in adjacent woodlands. And these studies continue today, yielding even more information that has withstood attacks by individuals and organized groups who oppose the multiple benefits of planned herbicide use on ROWs.

In summary, it was Egler's idea of the "tailored ROW," along with Beatty, Allen, and Kauffman's pioneering of the early selective application techniques demonstrated at Penn State under the direction of Bramble and Byrnes, that helped pave the way for continuing uses of herbicides.

Many others have also contributed their talents along the way, as attributed in all the literature since that time. It was a privilege to be part of those developments, but if any others remember those early days, beginning with the 1946 advent of organic herbicides, and can correct or add to this account, please contact the authors or the undersigned. We should never forget the pioneers of the past, on whose shoulders we stand.

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