

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department (AHTD) is committed to environmental stewardship through early planning, timely public involvement, full disclosure of environmental considerations, mitigation of environmental and cultural impacts where possible, context-sensitive design, transportation enhancements, and environmentally sensitive roadside maintenance and property management.

Activities routinely undertaken by the Department include public involvement meetings on impacts of AHTD projects, cultural resources surveys and excavations, geographic information systems project analysis, endangered species surveys and relocation projects, water quality monitoring, wetland impact assessments and mitigation, and wildlife habitat enhancements. This brochure highlights all of these programs with special emphasis on three programs: Roadside Maintenance, Historic Bridges and the AHTD Plant Nursery.

AHTD has been recognized with awards from the American Road and Transportation Builders Association for excellence in environmental protection and mitigation and Keep Arkansas Beautiful for beautification and community improvement.



For a free brochure "Wildflowers of the Arkansas Roadways" email Wildflowers@ahtd.state.ar.us or contact us by mail.

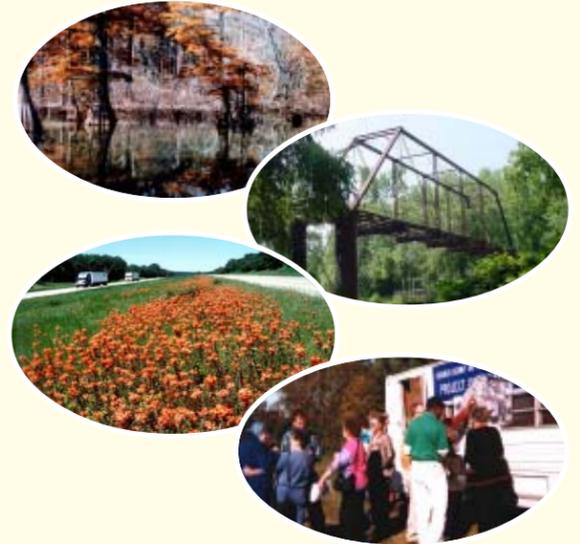


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PROTECTING AND PRESERVING THE NATURAL STATE



**Arkansas State Highway
and
Transportation Department**

AHTD's award winning Historic Bridge Management System (HBMS) uses a geographic information system to effectively manage the Historic Bridge Program. It allows AHTD to centralize historic bridge data and monitor historic bridge replacement across the state.

Plant Nursery

AHTD Nursery is an innovative approach towards compliance with regulatory mitigation requirements incurred by the Department. The nursery enables the Department to rescue, propagate, and return to the environment wetland and other sensitive native plants.



The greenhouse at AHTD's plant nursery.

AHTD presently oversees more than 3,000 acres of wetland mitigation property. Wetland mitigation involves the enhancement, restoration, creation, or preservation of wetlands as compensation for unavoidable wetland impacts incurred by new highway construction, highway improvements, and highway maintenance activities.

In addition to wetlands, highway projects may impact other communities with sensitive plant species. State and Federal Agencies may request plant mitigation including the rescue, propagation, or reintroduction of sensitive plant species impacted by highway projects.

Moved annually in the fall to preserve open habitat. Interstate movings are timed to encourage early-summer wildflowers.

The integration of these elements into a statewide maintenance program provides the greatest opportunity for roadside enhancement while maintaining the integrity of native herbaceous perennials as well as motorist safety.

Historic Bridge Program

AHTD's Historic Bridge Program is designed to balance historic preservation needs with the traffic and safety needs of the public. AHTD conducts historic bridge inventories every 5 years. These surveys document bridges potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places or the Arkansas Register of Historic Places.



Rehabilitation of Historic Cotter Bridge over the White River in Baxter County, Arkansas.

When a historic bridge is programmed for replacement the Department will review alternatives to the demolition of the bridge. One alternative is rehabilitation of the bridge either for vehicular traffic, pedestrian or bicycle use. If an appropriate alternative cannot be found, the bridge will be marketed. Marketing is an attempt to find an agency or individual willing to assume responsibility for the bridge, whether the bridge remains in place or is moved to a new location.

In 1998, AHTD met with representatives of Keep Arkansas Beautiful, the Arkansas Native Plant Society, the Cooperative Extension Service, and the Arkansas Federation of Garden Clubs to develop roadside maintenance schedules that provide opportunities for the preservation and enhancement of wildflower populations and satisfy motorists' safety concerns.

Roadside Maintenance Program



Mowing on Interstate Highways is timed to promote early summer wildflowers.

While many states have wildflower programs that concentrate on annual plantings of flowers for highway beautification, a more ecologically and environmentally sensitive program was developed to encourage and protect naturally occurring wildflowers as well as planted populations. The plan included a reduction in the number of annual mowings and a reduction of the area mowed during each mowing cycle.

Critical to public acceptance of Arkansas' maintenance program is the knowledge that wildflower populations must be moved on an annual basis or woody plants will replace these herbaceous perennials through natural succession. With this understanding, "transition zones" were established statewide on non-Interstate highways and on Interstate interchanges. These transition zones lie between required high-maintenance zones, reforested natural zones or right-of-way limits. Transition zones are

Environmental Stewardship in Action



Public Involvement meetings gather comments from local citizens.



The Public Involvement trailer is used when a building is not available.



Water quality monitoring during a construction project.



The American burying beetle is one of the endangered species identified and relocated during projects.



AHTD biologist dives to survey for endangered mussels.



Biologists separate mussels by species.



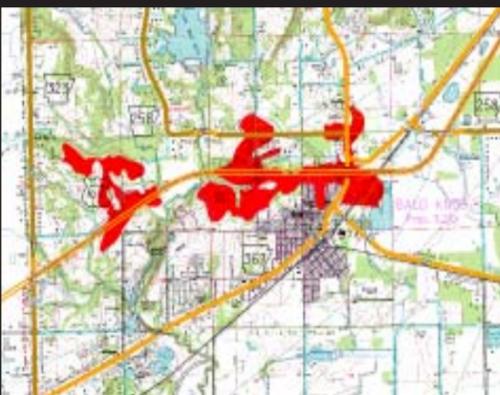
Archeological excavations of a Native American site.



Impacts to historic structures are avoided whenever possible.



Native American consultation is an important part of AHTD's commitment to cultural resources protection.



GIS is used during project analysis and to create a variety of maps illustrating project impacts.



Staff members using a Global Positioning System (GPS) to delineate wetlands.



Raptor platforms and birdboxes enhance wildlife habitat.



Wildflowers are planted to enhance roadsides.



Underground storage tanks and other potential hazards are removed from highway right of way.



Prior to construction noise levels are measured to establish ambient conditions adjacent to highways.