



Your name & any Technicians working with you

RYAN MCPHERREN ROADSIDE & TRAIL
MANAGER

MIKE YOUNG (EQUIPMENT OPERATOR)

SCOTT SMYTH (EQUIPMENT OPERATOR)





What other job titles/duties do you have? Weed Commissioner, Ranger, etc.

JUST ROADSIDE & TRAIL BIOLOGIST- I ALSO HELP WITH SEEDING AND WEED CONTROL ON NEW WETLANDS AND BIOREACTOR SITES FOR PUBLIC WORKS WATER RESOURCES DIVISION



Where is your County located? Are you more rural or suburban? Or a mix?

Central Iowa -Suburban



How long has your IRVM Program been around? Who's worked there previously? How long have you been there?

-Polk County started an IRVM program in 1990 (Loren Lown first roadside manager) Program has had inconsistent years since early 2000s on how active program is, that was when Loren changed positions. Have not had designated Roadside Manager until my position.

-Brett Nekola (current Secondary Roads Operation Manager) Operator doing IRVM work.

-I have been in my position here for about a year and a half (for Warren County Conservation Board before this position)



Loren Lown, Polk County's first integrated roadside vegetation manager, examines seeds in an expanding stretch of tall grass prairie along a northern county road. Lown said he hopes to see blazing star, purple cone flower, butterfly weed, compass plant and big and little bluestem providing wildlife habitat and curbing sedimentation along Polk's rural roads.

Are you with Secondary Roads/Conservation/Independent? How many miles of road do you maintain/acres? If with Conservation/Independent- who does what work, how do you assign or get the work done?

Public Works- Roads

About 800 miles of roads

My position is also split with Conservation, but that is only for vegetation on paved bike trails. Cutting trees/branches, spraying, seeding. Equipment operators stay to roads and I find a Conservation Tech. to help if needed on trails. (56 miles of trail)



What types of work have you done in natural resource management?

- -Trail Work (building and maintaining multi-use sustainable soft surface trails)
- -Handful of Natural Resource Technician positions- typical work like seeding (seed mix design, harvesting/cleaning, site prep, and planting), TSI, prescribed burns, controlling weeds/brush, basic plant inventories

7



What is your biggest challenge you see in your County? Funding, lack of personnel, invasive species, equipment, support from staff/mgt/Board of Supervisors?

-There is a majority of support for IRVM practices within the county, but when it comes down to projects there is reluctancy to fully commit in implementing everywhere and every time in the county.

-would like to be more proactive with weeds and brush control, reduce ditch mowing, and to use more native seed

-the program and support are heading in the right direction; I think it will just take time for change



8

What would you say is the most important tool you have? Sprayer, hydroseeder, mower, chipper, etc.?

Finn T120 Hydroseeder



Does your position also help with snow removal/rock hauling? Do you use any Rx fire in your management currently or would you like to in the future?

I personally do not help with snow or rock. The equipment operators who are designated for IRVM work do snow/rock, among other tasks. -Fire has been used in past, but not currently. Operators are doing the NWCG trainings this winter and we are planning on starting this spring with a few Rx fires and build on that



What is your favorite native species you use in your mixes? Ie. Big Bluestem, various wildflowers, etc.? Do you have many roadside prairie remnants left in your County?

GOLDEN ALEXANDER (*ZIZIA AUREA*) EASY TO GROW, CHEAP, EARLY BLOOMER, COLORFUL

-THERE ARE A FEW ROADSIDE REMNANTS IN THE COUNTY. ONE EVEN HAS A FEW SPECIES WHERE THAT IS THE ONLY SPOT IN THE COUNTY THE SPECIES IS AT THAT I AM AWARE OF



Downy Gentian (*Gentiana puberulenta*) at a Polk County Roadside Remnant

BEST ROADSIDE PROJECT YOU'VE BEEN INVOLVED WITH- WHY IS IT YOUR FAVORITE OR MOST MEMORABLE? HOW WERE YOU INVOLVED AND WHAT MAKES IT THE BEST IN YOUR MIND? IE. PLANTING SUCCESS, AESTHETICS, GRUMPY LANDOWNERS, GATEWAY PROJECTS, COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT, NOXIOUS WEEDS MANAGED, ETC.

Broadway Ave. Biocell Planting project that happened in 2024. The funding was already in place, which is a huge positive, and all I had to do was the fun part. I got to select the species and design the layout for 6 different biocells that are right along a main road that many people will see. I planted over 2,000 plugs with help from different volunteers over a couple of days and by the end of the season, they filled in nicely for their first year. The project was successful, and I had fun doing it





Personal: include as much as you'd like to: spouse, kids, hobbies, etc.

I currently live in Altoona, but I am from Oskaloosa originally and went to Central College in Pella for Environmental Science. I met my wife Allison at Central and she now teaches science at South East Polk High School. I spend a lot of my free time running, bird watching, rock hunting, hiking, gardening with natives, and reading. I enjoy exploring different parks and welcome any suggestions for new places to go.

My wife Allison and I out Birding

contact info

Ryan McPherren

(515) 286-3705

Ryan.Mcpherren@polkcountyiowa.gov

