Hand Picking Standing Corn Rows
TO REDUCE BLOWING SNOW ON MINNESOTA HIGHWAYS

BACKGROUND
In the winter of 2013-2014 Minnesota Farm Operators helped protect 7 miles of state highway from blowing snow by leaving standing corn rows. The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has an innovative program which works with farm operators to leave standing corn rows, standing from fall to spring. These standing corn rows act as snow fences which catch snow throughout the winter to reduce blowing snow on state highways.

BENEFITS OF STANDING CORN SNOW FENCES
- Protects the highway from snow and blowing snow
- Increases visibility
- Safer driving conditions
- Less salt application
- Less plowing expense to roadway
- Provides public and community value to area residents
- Shows farmer leadership and community service

FARMER HASSLES FOR STANDING CORN ROWS
- Ear corn left in the field
- Farmer combines in the spring with 50% loss
- Handle the corn (store or haul to town)
- Possible volunteer corn in soybeans (next year)
- Spring tillage pass required
- Time required to get out the equipment and complete the harvest and tillage passes in the spring

REASONS TO HAND PICK CORN
- Prevent volunteer corn in soybeans (next year)
- Income for farmer
- Community service/donation for organizations
- Friendly option for farmer
ORGANIZING A STANDING CORN PICKING CREW

1. Farm operator sign the standing corn row MnDOT agreement.
2. Farm operator or MnDOT staff contacts volunteer organization or leader directly or Extension staff to help identify an organization. (Farmer can choose any youth or adult organization; 4-H and FFA have participated in the past).
3. Volunteer organizational leader contacts farmer for times and equipment needed to pick ear corn.
4. Plan pick times early in the afternoon to avoid the dew.
5. Rule of thumb: double the rows for volunteers (6 rows = 12 volunteers needed, plus 2 bucket runners).
6. 5 gallon buckets are used to collect from each row (12 buckets needed for 6 rows min.)
7. 2 people and 2 buckets per row is best (leapfrog [10-20 ft stretch] process down the row).
8. Need bucket runners to empty full buckets (1 for 3 rows).
9. Wagons on both sides of 6 row snowfence (3 rows for each wagon).
10. Volunteers need to dress for the weather, wear gloves and proper footwear, and bring water.

FARMER OBLIGATION

- Sign and follow the standing corn row MnDOT agreement
- Identify corn rows to be left for road protection
- Leave a 20 foot buffer on both sides of corn rows (no tillage)
- Chop stalks (if possible) on both sides of standing corn
- Farmer keeps the hand picked ear corn or donate to the picking organization
- Provide wagons for ear corn which is hand picked (dump wagons are best)
- Farmer responsible for the movement and dumping of picked corn in wagons
- Donate to your organization who hand picks the corn (charitable donation). In 2013, farm operators donated on average $523/acre to non-profit organizations who hand picked their corn (donation to organization is determined by the farmer)

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STANDING CORN ROWS:

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