

Hand Picking Standing Corn Rows

TO REDUCE BLOWING SNOW ON MINNESOTA HIGHWAYS

BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has identified over 3,700 annual snow problem sites on Minnesota state highways. To reduce the cost of clearing and maintaining these selected highways, MnDOT is paying farmers/landowners who provide a snow fence on their property. These snow fences can be living or structural snow fences, hay bales, silage bags or standing corn rows (6 to 12 rows). Standing corn rows act as snow fences which catch snow throughout the winter to reduce blowing snow on state highways. **Standing corn rows cannot be combine harvested in the fall but can be hand harvested.** z.umn.edu/hpcorn

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, harvest and till 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

GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZING A STANDING CORN PICKING CREW

1. Farm operator signs the standing corn row MnDOT agreement.
2. Farm operator or MnDOT staff contacts volunteer organization 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 (i.e., 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 minimum)
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 (to drive wagons on)
- Ear Corn Hand Picking Options:
 1. Farmer keeps corn, gives a charitable donation 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
 2. Farmer donates corn to the picking organization.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT STANDING CORN ROWS:

MnDOT:

MnDOT Snow Fence Contacts:

z.umn.edu/snowfencecontacts

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