

Sustainable Corridor Management: A Guide to Balancing Power Needs and Environmental Stewardship

Study Committee C3 has recently published Technical Brochure (TB) 966 relating to working group (WG) 3.09 on Sustainable Corridor Management. The technical brochure presents the culmination of work spanning a number of years. Participation across a number of countries included responding to surveys and contributing to the TB.

Managing the land beneath overhead power lines presents a complex challenge, requiring a delicate balance between ensuring reliable electricity transmission and respecting environmental concerns and landowner rights. The technical brochure provides a comprehensive framework for navigating these competing interests, drawing on survey data from thirty-two countries to highlight best practices.

Traditionally, the primary focus of utility companies has been on maintaining a safe, clear right-of-way (RoW) to prevent vegetation interference and ensure access for maintenance. However, with growing awareness of climate change and biodiversity, the industry is shifting towards more sustainable approaches. The technical brochure identifies the potential value of power line corridors to provide ecological zones, which can be managed to benefit both nature and the local community.

Key findings and recommendations from the technical brochure include the importance of early and transparent stakeholder engagement with landowners, environmental Non-Government Organisations, and local authorities when developing new powerline routes or corridors. Effective communication and the use of flexible RoW approaches can assist in mitigating the "not in my backyard" phenomenon by working collaboratively to reduce opposition to new projects.

The document advocates for sustainable vegetation management methods that go beyond simple clearing, such as establishing new habitats, using specific grazing animals, or planting low-growing, native species. These practices not only enhance biodiversity but also offer economic benefits through reduced long-term maintenance costs. These benefits also include an improved ability to manage the environmental challenges related to the changing climate.

An additional benefit relates to the image presented by the Utility in terms of how it conducts its corridor management. If this is seen as positive and clear attempts have been made to enhance sustainability, there is likely to be a more positive reception to new transmission corridors. This should assist with the ability to secure these corridors for the rapid transition to renewables.

The Technical Brochure is free for members and 300€ for non-members.