

314.23 Environmental protection.

It is declared to be in the general public welfare of Iowa and a highway purpose that highway maintenance, construction, reconstruction, and repair shall protect and preserve, by not causing unnecessary destruction, the natural or historic heritage of the state. In order to provide for the protection and preservation, the following shall be accomplished in the design, construction, reconstruction, relocation, repair, or maintenance of roads, streets, and highways:

1. *Woodlands.* Woodland removed shall be replaced by plantings as close as possible to the initial site, or by acquisition of an equal amount of woodland in the general vicinity for public ownership and preservation, or by other mitigation deemed to be comparable to the woodland removed, including, but not limited to, the improvement, development, or preservation of woodland under public ownership.
2. *Wetlands.* Wetland removed shall be replaced by acquisition of wetland, in the same general vicinity if possible, for public ownership and preservation, or by other mitigation deemed to be comparable to the wetland removed, including, but not limited to, the improvement, development, or preservation of wetland under public ownership.
3. *Public parks.* Highways, streets, and roads constructed on or through publicly owned lands comprising parks, preserves, or recreation areas, shall be located and designed, in consultation with the public entity owning the land, so as to blend aesthetically with the areas and to minimize noise. When land is taken from the areas for highway construction and if, in consultation with the public entity owning the land, mitigation is deemed necessary, the land shall be replaced by an equal or greater amount for public use, or by other mitigation, undertaken in consultation with the public entity owning the land, and deemed to be appropriate to the amount of land taken, including, but not limited to, the improvement, development, or preservation of the areas.
4. *Prime agricultural lands.* Topsoil removed may be utilized for landscaping and other necessary construction. Excess topsoil shall be made available to the former landowner or other landowners whose land was purchased for the construction or others, and if not acquired by one of these parties, it may be disposed.