

Influence of Field Windbreaks on Landscape Aesthetics: Preliminary Results

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Abstract: Field windbreaks provide numerous benefits such as decreased soil erosion, crop and livestock protection, wildlife habitat, and carbon sequestration. They also have a significant impact on the visual appearance of surrounding agricultural landscapes. Although this benefit seems to be apparent, little is known about what people think of field windbreaks and which windbreak features are the most important for aesthetic reasons. A mail survey was conducted to reveal the opinions of Iowa residents on field windbreaks and their influence on the visual appearance of agricultural landscapes. Additionally, respondents' willingness to support financially windbreak programs was examined. The survey was sent to 3,500 respondents, including 1,500 farm operators and 2,000 non-farmers. The overall response rate was 40%. A telephone follow-up was conducted to test for non-response bias; responses from 155 non-respondents were obtained. It seems that aesthetic benefits of field windbreaks were widely recognized by respondents. About 74% of them indicated that field windbreaks are important in diversifying agricultural landscapes, whereas 67% said that field windbreaks make agricultural landscapes visually more appealing. Further, 34% of respondents were willing to support financially a fund that would promote windbreak planting for aesthetic purposes.

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