

Improvement of the Environment along Railway Lines

■Restricting use of herbicides

Safe train operations require regular removal of weeds along railway lines. While we generally remove them manually, we also use a certain amount of herbicide. We keep the usage of herbicides to a minimum in both volume and range of use. When selecting herbicides for use, we select those from the safest of the three levels of toxicity to humans and animals, and from Category A, the safest of the five levels of toxicity to fish. We continue to observe the rules in place in order to keep our impact on the surrounding environment to a minimum, as with our initiative to postpone the spraying of herbicides when conditions on the scheduled day are not satisfactory for spraying. In FY 2011, 221 tons of herbicides were used.

■Harmony with the landscape

Constructing a large-scale railway facility or remodeling one can affect the immediate area and surrounding environment, and their design is increasingly important. From the stage of planning and designing, we consider harmony with the landscape along with function and economy, endeavoring to build facilities friendly to the regional environment. In the fiscal year ended March 2009, the Tenmagawa Bridge (between Kamikitamachi and Ottomo on the Tohoku Main Line) received the Civil Engineering Design Prize of the Japan Society of Civil Engineers—a recognition of our efforts by a distinguished outside party.