

SOP 6: EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL

Erosion and sedimentation from land-disturbing human activities can be a significant source of stormwater pollution. This Standard Operating Procedure describes methods for reducing or eliminating pollutant loading from such activities.

Controlling Erosion and Sediment through Design and Planning

Prevention of erosion and sedimentation is preferable to installing treatment devices. Consistent application and implementation of the following guidelines during the design and review phases can prevent erosion and sedimentation:

1. Avoid sensitive areas, steep slopes, and highly erodible soils to the maximum extent possible when developing site plans.
2. Identify potential problem areas before the site plan is finalized and approved.
3. Plan to use sediment barriers along contour lines, with a focus on areas where short-circuiting (i.e., flow around the barrier) may occur.
4. Use berms at the top of a steep slopes to divert runoff away from the slope's edge.
5. Design trapezoidal or parabolic vegetated drainage channels, not triangular.
6. Use vegetated channels with rip rap check dams, instead of impervious pavement or concrete, to reduce the water velocity of the conveyance system.
7. Design a check dam or sediment forebay with level spreader at the exit of outfalls to reduce water velocity of the discharge and collect sediment.
8. Use turf reinforcement matting to stabilize vegetated channels, encourage vegetation establishment, and withstand flow velocities without scouring the base of the channel.
9. Plan open channels to follow land contours so natural drainage is not disrupted.
10. Use organic matting for temporary slope stabilization and synthetic matting for permanent stabilization.
11. Provide a stable channel, flume, or slope drain where it is necessary to carry water down slopes.

Controlling Erosion and Sediment on Construction Sites

During the construction phase, it is important to inspect active sites regularly to ensure that practices are consistent with approved site plans and the site's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) or other document, as required by the municipality's legal authority. The following guidelines apply:

1. Erosion and sediment control features should be constructed before initiating activities that remove vegetated cover or otherwise disturb the site. These shall be installed consistent with the approved site plans and with manufacturer's instructions.
2. Erosion and sediment control devices shall be inspected by the contractor regularly, and maintained as needed to ensure function.

3. In the SWPPP or other document, the contractor shall clearly identify the party responsible for maintaining erosion and sediment control devices.
4. An inspection should be completed of active construction sites every month, at a minimum, to check the status of erosion and sedimentation controls. Refer to SOP 5, "Construction Site Inspection", for construction site stormwater inspection procedures.
5. Existing vegetation should be maintained on site as long as possible.
6. Construction should proceed progressively on the site in order to minimize exposed soil, and disturbed areas should be restored as soon as possible after work has been completed.
7. Stockpiles shall be stabilized by seeding or mulching if they are to remain for more than two weeks.
8. Disturbed areas shall be protected from stormwater runoff by using protective Best Management Practices (BMPs).
9. Clean water shall be diverted away from disturbed areas on construction sites to prevent erosion and sedimentation.
10. Sediment traps and sediment barriers should be cleaned out regularly to reduce clogging and maintain design function.
11. Vegetated and wooded buffers shall be protected.
12. Soils shall be stabilized by mulching and/or seeding when they would be exposed for more than one week during the dry season, or more than two days during the rainy season.
13. Vegetation shall be allowed to establish before introducing flows to channels.
14. Regular light watering shall be used for dust control, as this is more effective than infrequent heavy watering.
15. Excessive soil compaction with heavy machinery shall be avoided, to the extent possible.
16. Construction activities during months with higher runoff rates shall be limited, to the extent possible.

Controlling Erosion and Sediment by Proper Maintenance of Permanent BMPs

Many construction phase BMPs can be integrated into the final site design, but ongoing inspection and maintenance are required to ensure long-term function of any permanent BMP. Refer to SOP 9, "Inspection of Constructed Best Management Practices", for more information. The following guidelines summarize the requirements for long-term maintenance of permanent BMPs.

1. Responsibility for maintaining erosion and sediment control devices shall be clearly identified.
2. Erosion and sediment control devices shall be inspected following heavy rainfall events to ensure they are working properly.
3. Erosion control blankets shall be utilized when seeding slopes.
4. Vegetated and wooded buffers shall be protected, and left undisturbed to the extent possible.
5. Runoff shall not be diverted into a sensitive area unless this has been specifically approved.
6. Sedimentation basins shall be cleaned out once sediment reaches 50% of the basin's design capacity.
7. Snow shall not be plowed into, or stored within, retention basins, rain gardens, or other BMPs.

8. Easements and service routes shall be maintained, to enable maintenance equipment to access BMPs for regular cleaning.

Related Standard Operating Procedures

1. SOP 5, Construction Site Inspection
2. SOP 9, Inspection of Constructed Best Management Practices