Design Considerations

- Drainage Area Size
- Potential Pretreatment Requirements

Targeted Constituents

- ✓ Sediment
- ✓ Nutrients
- ✓ Trash
- ✓ Metals
- ✓ Bacteria
- ✓ Oil and Grease
- ✓ Organics

Removal Effectiveness

See New Development and Redevelopment Handbook-Section 5.

Description

A manufactured wetland is similar to public domain stormwater wetlands. In a manufactured wetland, gravel substrate and subsurface flow of the stormwater through the root systems force the vegetation to remove nutrients and dissolved pollutants from the stormwater.

Only one company currently manufactures a pre-engineered wetland: It consists of a standard module, about 9.5 feet in diameter and 4 feet in height. The module is constructed of recycled polyethylene. The number of units is varied to meet the design volume of the site.

California Experience

There are currently only a few installations in California.

Advantages

- Constructed wetlands remove dissolved pollutants unlike many of the other treatment technologies, whether manufactured or in the public domain.
- Gravel substrate and subsurface flow of the stormwater through the root systems forces the vegetation to remove nutrients and dissolved pollutants from the stormwater.
- Unlike standard constructed wetlands (TC-21), there is no standing water in the manufactured wetland between storms (after emptying with each storm). This minimizes but does not entirely eliminate the opportunity for mosquito breeding.
- Can be incorporated into the landscaping of the development.
- The gravel substrate likely provides a good environment for bacteria, facilitating the removal of nitrogen and the degradation of oil and greases, and other organic compounds.
- The gravel substrate can be augmented with media that is specifically effective at removing dissolved pollutants, increasing further the performance of the system.
- Vegetation is more easily harvested in comparison to a wet pond or standard constructed wetland (TC-21).
- Provides modest habitat for insects and other small invertebrates which in turn provide food for birds and other small animals.

Limitations

- Not likely suitable for drainage areas greater than an acre due to the number of units that is required for larger sites.
- May attract invasive wetland species
- May require irrigation during the dry season
- With an emptying time as much as 5 days, a breeding ground for mosquitoes may occur during and immediately following each storm
- If site development requirements of local government also includes detention for flow control, the drawdown characteristics of the system must be compatible with the detention system.
- Where many units are required, the pattern of circular plastic covers of the center wells may not be appealing.

Design and Sizing Guidelines

The unit consists of two concentric chambers, analogous to a doughnut. The inner chamber is open whereas the outer chamber is filled with gravel in which the wetland plants reside. The water enters a center well, moving in a circular motion around nearly the entire circumference of the well. Via floating surface skimmers the water then enters the outer chamber. The flow rate is controlled at the outlet with a valve. The substrate for the vegetation is small gravel. Gravel substrate encourages the wetland vegetation to use nutrients and metals in the stormwater. The concept of subsurface flow through gravel has its parentage with subsurface flow constructed wetlands used to treat wastewater.

The unit includes a burlap bag over the inlet to remove debris, and screens within the center well for the same purpose. However, the upstream drainage system is considered the primary remover of coarse solids and debris. If the drainage system lacks drain inlets with sumps where coarse sediments and floatables are removed, it is desirable to include a pretreatment unit for this purpose such as a manhole or wet vault of suitable size.

Table 1 Supplemental Media

Targeted Pollutant	Alternative Media	References
Complex organics (e.g., pesticides)	Activated carbon	Metcalf and Eddy (2002), Minton (2002)
Petroleum hydrocarbons	Activated carbon, organoclay, granular polymer	Minton (2002)
Dissolved metals	Zeolite, activated carbon	Minton (2002), Groffman, et al. (1997), Netzer and Hughes (1984), Stormwater Management Inc. technical memos
Dissolved phosphorus	Blast furnace slag, iron-ore, iron wool, limestone, aluminum oxide, dolomite, iron-infused resin	James, et al. (1992), Minton (2002), Shapiro (1999), Ayoub, et al. (2001), Storm-water Management Inc memos

The design water quality volume is determined by local governments or sized so that 85% of the annual runoff volume is treated.

Construction/Inspection Considerations

Refer to manufacturer guidelines.

Performance

There is little operating data for the manufactured wetland, although these data indicate very high removal efficiencies, similar to created stormwater wetlands. An advantage of wet ponds and standard constructed wetlands over most other treatment technologies is the removal of dissolved pollutants. However, this occurs only to the extent that the stormwater pollutants are able to diffuse into the soil where they are removed by the soil or the plants. Except for non-rooted plants, pollutant uptake by vegetation does not occur in the overlying wet pool (Minton, 2002). Placement of wetland plants in gravel with the stormwater flowing directly through the root system forces uptake by the vegetation. To maintain performance therefore requires annual or harvesting of the vegetation (See Maintenance). However, the removal of dissolved phosphorus, metals, and complex organics like pesticides in earthen-lined ponds and wetlands is primarily by chemical sorption or precipitation with the soil, not uptake by plants (Minton, 2002). Gravel substrate does not provide ideal conditions for these chemical processes. There are currently no operating data for the manufactured wetland with respect to the removal of dissolved pollutants and therefore whether uptake solely by plants is sufficient is unknown. It may be desirable to augment the gravel with media capable of removing dissolved pollutants. The supplemental media can be specific for the pollutant that is to be removed. Table 1 lists media that have been evaluated in either stormwater or wastewater constructed wetlands or filtration systems.

The gravel substrate likely provides a good environment for bacteria, facilitating the removal of nitrogen (its primary mechanism of removal) and the degradation of petroleum and other organic compounds. While this has been confirmed to occur in the manufactured product discussed here, experience with constructed wetlands used for wastewater treatment (Minton, 2002) suggests that it likely occurs

Siting Criteria

While not stated by the manufacturer, the system is likely most appropriate for small drainage areas of an approximately an acre or less, given the number of units required per acre.

Additional Design Guidelines

As noted previously, the number of units installed is the function of the volume of water to be treated: multiple units are installed in parallel with incoming stormwater split via a manifold. The storage volume of one unit is approximately 185 ft3. The recommended emptying rate is 0.25 gallons per minute (average). To illustrate sizing, assume a development site of one acre and the design event is 0.75 inches. The total volume of the design event is 2,722 cubic feet. Thus, a minimum of 15 units is required, ignoring throughput during the storm. At this rate, a unit drains in approximately 3.8 days.

However, the emptying time must be considered with respect to the inter-event time between storms. If the emptying time is too great there is a statistical probability of some water being present in the units when the next storm occurs. If so, the full volume of the design event is not treated over the long term. The manufacturer currently does not provide a design method that considers this factor. The recommended approach is to use the method presented in TC-22 for Extended Detention systems inasmuch as the Storm Treat is a "fill-and-draw" system that functions like Extended Detention and should be expected to capture and treat the same stormwater volume over time.

Fewer units are possible if the upstream drainage system is able to store water, although this extends the emptying time. If a detection facility is required for flow control, it can provide the necessary storage and the number of wetland units is reduced, but not substantially given the need to drain the system in a timely fashion. Furthermore, if a detention facility is included it must control the release rate, not the manufactured wetland. This may require a more rapid release rate than recommended by the manufacturer. However, there are no data relating emptying rate with performance. Since the system also functions in effect as a horizontal filter, throughput rates higher than what is recommended by the manufacturer may be possible without a significant reduction in performance.

Maintenance

To maximize the benefits of wetland vegetation in its removal of pollutants, the vegetation must be harvested each growth season. Harvesting is particularly important with respect to the removal of phosphorus and metals, less so nitrogen. Harvesting should occur by mid-summer before the plants begin to transfer phosphorus from the aboveground foliage to subsurface roots, or begin to lose metals that desorb during plant die-off. While not stated by the manufacturer, it is also desirable that every few years the entire plant mass including roots is harvested. This is because the belowground biomass constitutes a significant reservoir (possibly half) of the nutrients and metals that are removed from the stormwater by plants (Minton, 2002). Annual maintenance is typical.

If debris and floatable material is not effectively removed in the pretreatment unit, premature clogging of the debris bag may occur.

- Crop vegetation near end of each growth season to capture the nutrients and pollutants removed by the wetland vegetation.
- Inspect periodically to ensure that invasive species of wetland plants is not occurring
- Conduct inspection during the dry season to determine if irrigation of plants is necessary
- Clean center well periodically.

Cost

Manufacturers provide costs for the units including delivery. Installation costs are generally on the order of 50 to 100 % of the manufacturer's cost.

Cost Considerations

- If the drainage system lacks drain inlets with sumps where coarse sediments and floatables are removed, it is desirable to include a pretreatment unit for this purpose such as a manhole or wet vault of suitable size. This should be factored in the cost-analysis when comparing to other treatment BMPs. If already a requirement of the local government, a detention facility for flow control can serve this purpose.

- In comparison to public domain wet ponds (TC-20) and constructed wetlands (TC-21), vegetation harvesting is simpler, and therefore less costly.

References and Sources of Additional Information

Ayoub, G.M., B. Koopman, and N. Pandya, 2001, Iron and aluminum hydroxy (oxide) coated filter media for low-concentration phosphorus removal, Water Environ. Res., 73, 7, 478

Groffman, A., S. Peterson, D. Brookins, 1997, The removal of lead and other heavy metals from wastewater streams using zeolites, zeocarb, and other natural materials as a sorption media, presented to the 70th Annual Conference, Water Environment Federation, Alexandria, Virginia

James, B.R., M.C. Rabvenhorst, and G.A. Frigon, 1992, Phosphorus sorption by peat and sand amended with iron oxides or steel wool, Water Environ. Res., 64, 699. Manufacturer's literature Metcalf and Eddy, Inc., 2002, Wastewater Engineering: Treatment, Disposal, Reuse, McGraw-Hill, New York, New York. Minton, G.R., 2002, Stormwater Treatment: Biological, Chemical, and Engineering Principles, RPA Press, Seattle, Washington, 416 pages. Netzer, A., and D.E. Hughes, 1984, Adsorption of copper, lead, and cobalt by activated carbon, Water Res., 18, 927. Shapiro and Associates and the Bellevue Utilities Department, 1999, Lakemont stormwater treatment facility monitoring report, Bellevue, Washington.