



Maintenance Concerns, Objectives, and Goals

- Clogged Soil or Outlet Structures
- Invasive Species Management
- Vegetation/Landscape Maintenance
- Erosion
- Channelization of Flow
- Aesthetics

General Description

Grassed buffer strips (vegetated filter strips, filter strips, and grassed filters) are vegetated surfaces that are designed to treat sheet flow from adjacent surfaces. Filter strips function by slowing runoff velocities and allowing sediment and other pollutants to settle and by providing some infiltration into underlying soils. Filter strips were originally used as an agricultural treatment practice and have more recently evolved into an urban practice. With proper design and maintenance, filter strips can provide relatively high pollutant removal. In addition, the public views them as landscaped amenities and not as stormwater infrastructure. Consequently, there is little resistance to their use.

Inspection/Maintenance Considerations

Vegetated buffer strips require frequent landscape maintenance. In many cases, vegetated buffer strips initially require intense maintenance, but less maintenance is needed over time. In many cases, maintenance tasks can be completed by a landscaping contractor. Maintenance requirements typically include grass or shrub-growing activities such as irrigation, mowing, trimming, removal of invasive species, and replanting when necessary. Buffer strips require more tending as the volume of sediment increases. Vegetated buffer strips can become a nuisance due to mosquito breeding in level spreaders (unless designed to dewater completely in 72 hours or less) and/or if proper drainage slopes are not maintained.

Targeted Constituents

✓ Sediment	■
✓ Nutrients	●
✓ Trash	▲
✓ Metals	■
✓ Bacteria	●
✓ Oil and Grease	■
✓ Organics	▲
✓ Oxygen Demanding	▲

Legend (Removal Effectiveness)

- Low
- High
- ▲ Medium



Inspection Activities	Suggested Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Once the vegetated buffer strip is established, inspect at least three times per year. Repair all damage immediately. ■ Inspect buffer strips after seeding and repair as needed. 	Post construction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inspect buffer strip and repair all damage immediately. ■ Inspect soil and repair eroded areas. 	After major storms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Inspect for erosion or damage to vegetation, preferably at the end of the wet season to schedule summer maintenance and before major fall runoff to be sure the strips are ready for winter. However, additional inspection after periods of heavy runoff is desirable. ■ Inspect pea-gravel diaphragm/level spreader for clogging and effectiveness and remove built-up sediment. ■ Inspect for rolls and gullies. Immediately fill with topsoil, install erosion control blanket and seed or sod. ■ Inspect to ensure grass is well established. If not, either prepare soil and reseed or replace with alternative species. Install erosion control blanket. ■ Check for debris and litter, and areas of sediment accumulation. 	Semi-annual
Maintenance Activities	Suggested Frequency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Water plants daily for 2 weeks after construction. 	Post construction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Mow regularly to maintain vegetation height between 2 - 4 inches, and to promote thick, dense vegetative growth. Cut only when soil is dry to prevent tracking damage to vegetation, soil compaction and flow concentrations. Clippings are to be removed immediately after mowing. ■ Remove all litter, branches, rocks, or other debris. Damaged areas of the filter strip should be repaired immediately by reseeding and applying mulch. ■ Regularly maintain inlet flow spreader. ■ Irrigate during dry season (April through October) when necessary to maintain the vegetation. 	Frequently, as needed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remulch void areas. ■ Treat diseased trees and shrubs, remove dead vegetation. 	Semi-annual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remove sediment and replant in areas of buildup. Sediment accumulating near culverts and in channels should be removed when it builds up to 3 in. at any spot, or covers vegetation. ■ Limit fertilizer applications based on plant vigor and soil test results. ■ Rework or replant buffer strip if concentrated flow erodes a channel through the strip. 	Annual

Additional Information

Recent research (Colwell et al., 2000) indicates that grass height and mowing frequency have little impact on pollutant removal. Consequently, mowing may only be necessary once or twice a year for safety or aesthetics or to suppress weeds and woody vegetation.

Trash tends to accumulate in swale areas, particularly along highways. The need for litter removal is determined through periodic inspection, but litter should always be removed prior to mowing.

References

Metropolitan Council, Urban Small Sites Best Management Practices Manual. Available at: <http://www.metrocouncil.org/environment/Watershed/BMP/manual.htm>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Post-Construction Stormwater Management in New Development & Redevelopment BMP Factsheets. Available at: cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/bmp_files.cfm

Ventura Countywide Stormwater Quality Management Program, Technical Guidance Manual for Stormwater Quality Control Measures. July, 2002.