

Environmental Programs: Annual Update

Erosion Control Preparedness

Highway construction crews work hard to prevent rains from damaging the sites and washing dirt into streams. They prevent erosion by planting grasses, building ponds, and taking other precautions to protect disturbed soils. These precautions are taken in accordance with Temporary Erosion and Sediment Control (TESC) plans that are created by WSDOT project designers and required by individual permits. Each fall, WSDOT inspects construction sites to document how thoroughly these plans are implemented, evaluate how effective they are at preventing erosion, and identify areas for improvement. In October of 2006, WSDOT inspected 18 active projects (15 in western Washington and three in eastern Washington) with significant potential for erosion problems due to the projects' size, steepness, or proximity to sensitive waterways.

The table below contains the assessment results from 2002 through 2006. WSDOT steadily improved from 2003 through 2005. However, the level of performance dropped in 2006 for several of the recorded measures. All projects must be prepared for the wet season, and many projects this year with significant earthwork activities and erosion issues proved challenging.

A number of issues contributed to a drop in preparedness for 2006, including the delayed installation of ponds, ditches and pipes, waiting later to cover soils due to extended dry weather in October, reduced maintenance of erosion prevention measures, and finally less consistent use of pollutant spill containments near waterways

Environmental specialists recommended measures to better prepare for the wet season during the October 2006 visits. Many projects took steps to fix identified deficiencies prior to November. Their responsiveness allowed many projects to make it through the record setting November rainfall with relatively few problems.

Strategy for Improving Performance

Despite the overall good project performance in November, training and technical assistance will be focused on proactive erosion control. This includes preparing sites for the wet season in October prior to major rain events.. Efforts to improve performance in 2007 will focus on the seven assessment measures that fell into the "Fair" and "Poor" categories in 2006.

Erosion and Sediment Control Assessment Results

	Assessment Measure	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Status
Excellent	Dewatering	100%	71%	100%	100%	100%	stable ¹
Good	Delineate clearing limits	100%	100%	100%	95% ¹	94%	stable ¹
	Access routes prevent tracking of mud onto streets	98%	69%	91%	82%	94%	improved
	Storm drain inlet protection	74%	82%	83%	86% ¹	93%	improved
	Manage project erosion/sediment control BMPs ³ proactively	56%	75%	80%	90%	92%	stable ¹
	Control other pollutants from impacting water quality	N/A ²	N/A ²	100%	100%	89%	decreased
Fair	Amount of disturbed soil covered with erosion control BMPs ³	65%	45%	65%	70% ¹	74%	stable ¹
	Control flow rates	87%	84%	100%	95% ¹	72%	decreased
Poor	Sediment control BMPs ³ installed on time	90%	90%	100%	95% ¹	61%	decreased
	Channels for temporary stormwater conveyance are stabilized	90%	64%	73%	87%	59%	decreased
	Erosion control BMPs ³ installed on time (stabilize soils)	N/A ²	N/A ²	67%	86%	56%	decreased
	Protect cut & fill slopes	67%	50%	89%	79%	56%	decreased
	Maintain BMPs ³	70%	70%	50%	67%	44%	decreased

¹ Stable performance status was achieved for all measures that remained within 5% of the previous years' rating.

² Two new categories have been added since the 2003 report.

³ BMPs = Best Management Practices.

Source: WSDOT Environmental Services Office