



Photo Credit: Geoff Brosseau

Objectives

- Contain
- Educate
- Reduce/Minimize

Description

As a consequence of its function, the stormwater conveyance system collects and transports urban runoff that may contain certain pollutants. Maintaining catch basins, stormwater inlets, and other stormwater conveyance structures on a regular basis will remove pollutants, prevent clogging of the downstream conveyance system, restore catch basins' sediment trapping capacity, and ensure the system functions properly hydraulically to avoid flooding.

Approach

Suggested Protocols

Catch Basins/Inlet Structures

- Municipal staff should regularly inspect facilities to ensure the following:
 - Immediate repair of any deterioration threatening structural integrity.
 - Cleaning before the sump is 40% full. Catch basins should be cleaned as frequently as needed to meet this standard.
 - Stenciling of catch basins and inlets (see SC-75 Waste Handling and Disposal).
- Clean catch basins, storm drain inlets, and other conveyance structures in high pollutant load areas just before the wet season to remove sediments and debris accumulated during the summer.

Targeted Constituents

Sediment	☒
Nutrients	☒
Trash	☒
Metals	☒
Bacteria	☒
Oil and Grease	☒
Organics	☒
Oxygen Demanding	☒



- Conduct inspections more frequently during the wet season for problem areas where sediment or trash accumulates more often. Clean and repair as needed.
- Keep accurate logs of the number of catch basins cleaned.
- Record the amount of waste collected.
- Store wastes collected from cleaning activities of the drainage system in appropriate containers or temporary storage sites in a manner that prevents discharge to the storm drain.
- Dewater the wastes with outflow into the sanitary sewer if permitted. Water should be treated with an appropriate filtering device prior to discharge to the sanitary sewer. If discharge to the sanitary sewer is not allowed, water should be pumped or vacuumed to a tank and properly disposed of. Do not dewater near a storm drain or stream.
- Except for small communities with relatively few catch basins that may be cleaned manually, most municipalities will require mechanical cleaners such as eductors, vacuums, or bucket loaders.

Storm Drain Conveyance System

- Locate reaches of storm drain with deposit problems and develop a flushing schedule that keeps the pipe clear of excessive buildup.
- Collect flushed effluent and pump to the sanitary sewer for treatment.

Pump Stations

- Clean all storm drain pump stations prior to the wet season to remove silt and trash.
- Do not allow discharge from cleaning a storm drain pump station or other facility to reach the storm drain system.
- Conduct quarterly routine maintenance at each pump station.
- Inspect, clean, and repair as necessary all outlet structures prior to the wet season.
- Sample collected sediments to determine if landfill disposal is possible, or illegal discharges in the watershed are occurring.

Open Channel

- Consider modification of storm channel characteristics to improve channel hydraulics, to increase pollutant removals, and to enhance channel/creek aesthetic and habitat value.
- Conduct channel modification/improvement in accordance with existing laws. Any person, government agency, or public utility proposing an activity that will change the natural (emphasis added) state of any river, stream, or lake in California, must enter into a stream or Lake Alteration Agreement with the Department of Fish and Game. The developer-applicant should also contact local governments (city, county, special districts), other state agencies

(SWRCB, RWQCB, Department of Forestry, Department of Water Resources), and Federal Corps of Engineers and USFWS

Illicit Connections and Discharges

- During routine maintenance of conveyance system and drainage structures field staff should look for evidence of illegal discharges or illicit connections:
 - Is there evidence of spills such as paints, discoloring, etc.
 - Are there any odors associated with the drainage system
 - Record locations of apparent illegal discharges/illicit connections
 - Track flows back to potential dischargers and conduct aboveground inspections. This can be done through visual inspection of up gradient manholes or alternate techniques including zinc chloride smoke testing, fluorometric dye testing, physical inspection testing, or television camera inspection.
 - Once the origin of flow is established, require illicit discharger to eliminate the discharge.
- Stencil storm drains, where applicable, to prevent illegal disposal of pollutants. Storm drain inlets should have messages such as “Dump No Waste Drains to Stream” stenciled next to them to warn against ignorant or intentional dumping of pollutants into the storm drainage system.
- Refer to fact sheet SC-10 Non-Stormwater Discharges.

Illegal Dumping

- Regularly inspect and clean up hot spots and other storm drainage areas where illegal dumping and disposal occurs.
- Establish a system for tracking incidents. The system should be designed to identify the following:
 - Illegal dumping hot spots
 - Types and quantities (in some cases) of wastes
 - Patterns in time of occurrence (time of day/night, month, or year)
 - Mode of dumping (abandoned containers, “midnight dumping” from moving vehicles, direct dumping of materials, accidents/spills)
 - Responsible parties
- Post “No Dumping” signs in problem areas with a phone number for reporting dumping and disposal. Signs should also indicate fines and penalties for illegal dumping.
- Refer to fact sheet SC-10 Non-Stormwater Discharges.

SC-74 Drainage System Maintenance

- The State Department of Fish and Game has a hotline for reporting violations called Cal TIP (1-800-952-5400). The phone number may be used to report any violation of a Fish and Game code (illegal dumping, poaching, etc.).
- The California Department of Toxic Substances Control's Waste Alert Hotline, 1-800-69TOXIC, can be used to report hazardous waste violations.

Training

- Train crews in proper maintenance activities, including record keeping and disposal.
- Only properly trained individuals are allowed to handle hazardous materials/wastes.
- Train municipal employees from all departments (public works, utilities, street cleaning, parks and recreation, industrial waste inspection, hazardous waste inspection, sewer maintenance) to recognize and report illegal dumping.
- Train municipal employees and educate businesses, contractors, and the general public in proper and consistent methods for disposal.
- Train municipal staff regarding non-stormwater discharges (See SC-10 Non-Stormwater Discharges).

Spill Response and Prevention

- Refer to SC-11, Prevention, Control & Cleanup
- Have spill cleanup materials readily available and in a known location.
- Cleanup spills immediately and use dry methods if possible.
- Properly dispose of spill cleanup material.

Other Considerations

- Cleanup activities may create a slight disturbance for local aquatic species. Access to items and material on private property may be limited. Trade-offs may exist between channel hydraulics and water quality/riparian habitat. If storm channels or basins are recognized as wetlands, many activities, including maintenance, may be subject to regulation and permitting.
- Storm drain flushing is most effective in small diameter pipes (36-inch diameter pipe or less, depending on water supply and sediment collection capacity). Other considerations associated with storm drain flushing may include the availability of a water source, finding a downstream area to collect sediments, liquid/sediment disposal, and disposal of flushed effluent to sanitary sewer may be prohibited in some areas.
- Regulations may include adoption of substantial penalties for illegal dumping and disposal.
- Municipal codes should include sections prohibiting the discharge of soil, debris, refuse, hazardous wastes, and other pollutants into the storm drain system.
- Private property access rights may be needed to track illegal discharges up gradient.

- Requirements of municipal ordinance authority for suspected source verification testing for illicit connections necessary for guaranteed rights of entry.

Requirements

Costs

- An aggressive catch basin cleaning program could require a significant capital and O&M budget. A careful study of cleaning effectiveness should be undertaken before increased cleaning is implemented. Catch basin cleaning costs are less expensive if vacuum street sweepers are available; cleaning catch basins manually can cost approximately twice as much as cleaning the basins with a vacuum attached to a sweeper.
- Methods used for illicit connection detection (smoke testing, dye testing, visual inspection, and flow monitoring) can be costly and time-consuming. Site-specific factors, such as the level of impervious area, the density and ages of buildings, and type of land use will determine the level of investigation necessary. Encouraging reporting of illicit discharges by employees can offset costs by saving expense on inspectors and directing resources more efficiently. Some programs have used funds available from “environmental fees” or special assessment districts to fund their illicit connection elimination programs.

Maintenance

- Two-person teams may be required to clean catch basins with vacuor trucks.
- Identifying illicit discharges requires teams of at least two people (volunteers can be used), plus administrative personnel, depending on the complexity of the storm sewer system.
- Arrangements must be made for proper disposal of collected wastes.
- Requires technical staff to detect and investigate illegal dumping violations, and to coordinate public education.

Supplemental Information

Further Detail of the BMP

Storm Drain flushing

Sanitary sewer flushing is a common maintenance activity used to improve pipe hydraulics and to remove pollutants in sanitary sewer systems. The same principles that make sanitary sewer flushing effective can be used to flush storm drains. Flushing may be designed to hydraulically convey accumulated material to strategic locations, such as to an open channel, to another point where flushing will be initiated, or over to the sanitary sewer and on to the treatment facilities, thus preventing re-suspension and overflow of a portion of the solids during storm events. Flushing prevents “plug flow” discharges of concentrated pollutant loadings and sediments. The deposits can hinder the designed conveyance capacity of the storm drain system and potentially cause backwater conditions in severe cases of clogging.

Storm drain flushing usually takes place along segments of pipe with grades that are too flat to maintain adequate velocity to keep particles in suspension. An upstream manhole is selected to place an inflatable device that temporarily plugs the pipe. Further upstream, water is pumped into the line to create a flushing wave. When the upstream reach of pipe is sufficiently full to

cause a flushing wave, the inflated device is rapidly deflated with the assistance of a vacuum pump, releasing the backed up water and resulting in the cleaning of the storm drain segment.

To further reduce the impacts of stormwater pollution, a second inflatable device, placed well downstream, may be used to re-collect the water after the force of the flushing wave has dissipated. A pump may then be used to transfer the water and accumulated material to the sanitary sewer for treatment. In some cases, an interceptor structure may be more practical or required to re-collect the flushed waters.

It has been found that cleansing efficiency of periodic flush waves is dependent upon flush volume, flush discharge rate, sewer slope, sewer length, sewer flow rate, sewer diameter, and population density. As a rule of thumb, the length of line to be flushed should not exceed 700 feet. At this maximum recommended length, the percent removal efficiency ranges between 65-75 percent for organics and 55-65 percent for dry weather grit/inorganic material. The percent removal efficiency drops rapidly beyond that. Water is commonly supplied by a water truck, but fire hydrants can also supply water. To make the best use of water, it is recommended that reclaimed water be used or that fire hydrant line flushing coincide with storm drain flushing.

Flow Management

Flow management has been one of the principal motivations for designing urban stream corridors in the past. Such needs may or may not be compatible with the stormwater quality goals in the stream corridor.

Downstream flood peaks can be suppressed by reducing through flow velocity. This can be accomplished by reducing gradient with grade control structures or increasing roughness with boulders, dense vegetation, or complex banks forms. Reducing velocity correspondingly increases flood height, so all such measures have a natural association with floodplain open space. Flood elevations laterally adjacent to the stream can be lowered by increasing through flow velocity.

However, increasing velocity increases flooding downstream and inherently conflicts with channel stability and human safety. Where topography permits, another way to lower flood elevation is to lower the level of the floodway with drop structures into a large but subtly excavated bowl where flood flows are allowed to spread out.

Stream Corridor Planning

Urban streams receive and convey stormwater flows from developed or developing watersheds. Planning of stream corridors thus interacts with urban stormwater management programs. If local programs are intended to control or protect downstream environments by managing flows delivered to the channels, then it is logical that such programs should be supplemented by management of the materials, forms, and uses of the downstream riparian corridor. Any proposal for stream alteration or management should be investigated for its potential flow and stability effects on upstream, downstream, and laterally adjacent areas. The timing and rate of flow from various tributaries can combine in complex ways to alter flood hazards. Each section of channel is unique, influenced by its own distribution of roughness elements, management activities, and stream responses.

Flexibility to adapt to stream features and behaviors as they evolve must be included in stream reclamation planning. The amenity and ecology of streams may be enhanced through the landscape design options of 1) corridor reservation, 2) bank treatment, 3) geomorphic restoration, and 4) grade control.

Corridor reservation - Reserving stream corridors and valleys to accommodate natural stream meandering, aggradation, degradation, and over bank flows allows streams to find their own form and generate less ongoing erosion. In California, open stream corridors in recent urban developments have produced recreational open space, irrigation of streamside plantings, and the aesthetic amenity of flowing water.

Bank treatment - The use of armoring, vegetative cover, and flow deflection may be used to influence a channel's form, stability, and biotic habitat. To prevent bank erosion, armoring can be done with rigid construction materials, such as concrete, masonry, wood planks and logs, riprap, and gabions. Concrete linings have been criticized because of their lack of provision of biotic habitat. In contrast, riprap and gabions make relatively porous and flexible linings. Boulders, placed in the bed reduce velocity and erosive power.

Riparian vegetation can stabilize the banks of streams that are at or near a condition of equilibrium. Binding networks of roots increase bank shear strength. During flood flows, resilient vegetation is forced into erosion-inhibiting mats. The roughness of vegetation leads to lower velocity, further reducing erosive effects. Structural flow deflection can protect banks from erosion or alter fish habitat. By concentrating flow, a deflector causes a pool to be scoured in the bed.

Geomorphic restoration – Restoration refers to alteration of disturbed streams so their form and behavior emulate those of undisturbed streams. Natural meanders are retained, with grading to gentle slopes on the inside of curves to allow point bars and riffle-pool sequences to develop. Trees are retained to provide scenic quality, biotic productivity, and roots for bank stabilization, supplemented by plantings where necessary.

A restorative approach can be successful where the stream is already approaching equilibrium. However, if upstream urbanization continues new flow regimes will be generated that could disrupt the equilibrium of the treated system.

Grade Control - A grade control structure is a level shelf of a permanent material, such as stone, masonry, or concrete, over which stream water flows. A grade control structure is called a sill, weir, or drop structure, depending on the relation of its invert elevation to upstream and downstream channels.

A sill is installed at the preexisting channel bed elevation to prevent upstream migration of nick points. It establishes a firm base level below which the upstream channel can not erode.

A weir or check dam is installed with invert above the preexisting bed elevation. A weir raises the local base level of the stream and causes aggradation upstream. The gradient, velocity, and erosive potential of the stream channel are reduced. A drop structure lowers the downstream invert below its preexisting elevation, reducing downstream gradient and velocity. Weirs and drop structure control erosion by dissipating energy and reducing slope velocity.

When carefully applied, grade control structures can be highly versatile in establishing human and environmental benefits in stabilized channels. To be successful, application of grade control structures should be guided by analysis of the stream system both upstream and downstream from the area to be reclaimed.

Examples

The California Department of Water Resources began the Urban Stream Restoration Program in 1985. The program provides grant funds to municipalities and community groups to implement stream restoration projects. The projects reduce damages from streambank and watershed instability and floods while restoring streams' aesthetic, recreational, and fish and wildlife values.

In Buena Vista Park, upper floodway slopes are gentle and grassed to achieve continuity of usable park land across the channel of small boulders at the base of the slopes.

The San Diego River is a large, vegetative lined channel, which was planted in a variety of species to support riparian wildlife while stabilizing the steep banks of the floodway.

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