SECTION 3
VEGETATIVE MEASURES
FOR EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL

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VEGETATIVE MEASURES FOR EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL

Erosion is the gradual wearing away of the land surface as a result of uncontrolled wind and water energy. Sedimentation is the result of transport and delivery of eroded soil particles, deposited at some point. Erosion and sediment control is a complex interaction of soils, engineering water management, agronomic and horticultural practices. Decisions for resolving erosion conditions, both on site and within the upper watershed, are formulated based on surface and subsurface water, soil material, climatic conditions, and anticipated land use. Creating a stable slope is necessary prior to vegetating. Sloughing and slumping are not helpful in establishing a uniform protective cover.

General planning considerations for vegetating a steep slope will include evaluating the soil. Factors such as soil texture and steepness affect the stability of the slope. Texture also influences the permeability and water holding capacity of the soil. Many slopes are stripped of topsoil during the construction phase, leaving an infertile, compacted soil surface, void of valuable organic matter. Topsoil must be reapplied. Overly compacted slopes should be decompacted with appropriate equipment. Soil pH and nutrient level are determined by obtaining a representative soil sample for analysis from an accredited lab. Appropriate plants are selected to meet the final slope and soil conditions for the site.

Liming material sold in New York varies considerably in several ways. The mineral content (calcium and magnesium) of the limestone may be high or low, the fineness or particle sizes vary between suppliers, and the cost varies greatly. Two types of limestone are sold. The most common is limestone high in calcium. Dolomitic limestone contains magnesium (Mg) and calcium (Ca). Limestone sold in NY varies from 0 to 20% Mg while the calcium content of lime varies from 14.7% to 51.5%. Particle size determines how rapidly the calcium and magnesium will react with the acid in the soil. The finer the particle sizes, the quicker the reaction.

When purchasing agricultural limestone, one should state on the order that the amount should be adjusted to 100% effective neutralizing value (ENV). This is the way to compare materials as it adjusts for the reactive Ca and Mg and the particle size. The ENV is stated as the ratio needed to convert a limestone recommendation to 100% ENV. Thus, if the recommendation is 4 tons/acre of 100% ENV lime and the lime being used had an 80% ENV (1/ENV = 1.25), 4 times 1.25 or 5 tons/acre would be required.

The amount of limestone needed can be estimated by using the table below. A soil test is the only way to determine the soil pH. This table is very general, but it is useful for planning.

General lime guidelines (at 100% ENV)

Initial Soil pH	*Sands*	*Sandy Loams*	*Loams and Silt Loams*	*Silty Clay Loams*
		T/A of lime[1]		
4.5	2.5	6.0	9.5	13.0
4.6-4.7	2.5	6.0	9.0	12.5
4.8-4.9	2.5	5.5	8.5	12.0
5.0-5.1	2.0	5.0	7.5	10.5
5.2-5.3	1.5	4.0	6.5	8.5
5.4-5.5	1.0	3.0	4.0	6.0
5.6-5.7	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.5
5.8-5.9	0.7	1.5	2.5	3.5
6.0-6.1	0.6	1.5	2.0	3.0
6.2-6.3	0.4	1.0	1.5	2.0
6.~6.5	0.3	0.7	1.0	1.5
6.6-6.7	0.2	0.5	0.7	1.0

Lime guidelines are in tons per acre and are based on a plow depth of 8.0 inches. Correct rate if plowing to a different depth.

REFERENCE: Cornell Cooperative Extension. 2003 Cornell Guide for Integrated Field Crop Management, Pg. 32.

Fertilizer is sold with an analysis printed on the tag or bag. The first number is the percent of nitrogen (N), the second is phosphorus (P), and the third is potassium (K). Other elements are sometimes included and are listed with these basic three components. For example, a forty pound bag of 5-10-5 contains 2 lbs. N, 4 lbs. P (as P_2O_5), and 2 lbs. of K (as K_20). Select an appropriate analysis to meet the nutrients required for the specific site. Always apply as closely as possible the required amount of fertilizer to meet the requirements of the site. Adding surplus nitrogen may cause pollution of drinking water and saltwater ecosystems. Excessive phosphorus may accelerate the aging process of freshwater ecosystems. Excessive amounts of N and K2O may result in 'burning' the grass and killing it.

Water management on and above potentially eroding sites is extremely important. Large watersheds above a site may require extensive water control measures. Water flow paths must be controlled to allow the safe delivery of the water to an outlet to the side or bottom of the slope. Shallow ditches or diversions across the slope and above the area to be seeded is an effective method of avoiding wash-out of the seed and soil. Diversions may be constructed at a point where surface runoff water is intercepted and carried away from the slope and to a safe outlet. On large slopes,

benching may be necessary for bench drains or future maintenance (see standard for Land Grading). Subsurface drainage is frequently included to prevent long term saturated soil conditions and sloughing.

Conservation plantings need to effectively hold soil and control erosion, and they should enhance and blend with their surroundings. Mature plant size, form, and appearance must be considered along with their functionality to match the anticipated land use. Basic erosion control is accomplished by providing cover to the soil surface utilizing plants and/or mulch. It is the system of seedbed preparation, soil amendments, plant selection, proper timing of planting, and mulching that will optimize the chances of success. Characteristics of grasses such as low growth, horizontal above and below ground stems, leafy growth, and many fine roots for binding soil particles, make them the primary choice for vegetating slopes. Once the grass type is selected, then appropriate forbs, shrubs, or trees may be added to meet site conditions. The use of appropriate mulches will depend on site criteria and should be carefully evaluated. Although some materials are costly, they may prevent the need for more costly reshaping and reseeding.

Selection of proper vegetative materials for site stabilization is critical for environmental success. Species should be selected that are not considered "invasive." A primary list of invasive plants can be found at the website of the Invasive Plant Council of New York State (http://www.ipcnys.org). Any species not on this list but considered suspect should be verified at the appropriate regional or local level for acceptance.

STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR TEMPORARY CRITICAL AREA PLANTINGS

Definition

Providing erosion control protection to a critical area for an interim period. A critical area is any disturbed, denuded slope subject to erosion.

Purpose

To provide temporary erosion and sediment control. Temporary control is achieved by covering all bare ground areas that exist as a result of construction or a natural event.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

Temporary seedings may be necessary on construction sites to protect an area, or section, where final grading is complete, when preparing for winter work shutdown, or to provide cover when permanent seedings are likely to fail due to mid-summer heat and drought. The intent is to provide temporary protective cover during temporary shutdown of construction and/or while waiting for optimal planting time.

Criteria

Water management practices must be installed as appropriate for site conditions. The area must be rough graded and slopes physically stable. Large debris and rocks are usually removed. Seedbed must be seeded within 24 hours of disturbance or scarification of the soil surface will be necessary prior to seeding.

Fertilizer or lime are not typically used for temporary seedings.

IF: Spring or summer or early fall, then seed the area with ryegrass (annual or perennial) at 30 lbs. per acre (Approximately 0.7 lb./1000 sq. ft. or use 1 lb./1000 sq. ft.).
IF: Late fall or early winter, then seed Certified 'Aroostook' winter rye (cereal rye) at 100 lbs. per acre (2.5 lbs./1000 sq. ft.).

Any seeding method may be used that will provide uniform application of seed to the area and result in relatively good soil to seed contact.

Mulch the area with hay or straw at 2 tons/acre (approx. 90 lbs./1000 sq. ft. or 2 bales). Quality of hay or straw mulch allowable will be determined based on long term use and visual concerns. Mulch anchoring will be required where wind or areas of concentrated water are of concern. Wood fiber hydromulch or other sprayable products approved for erosion control (nylon web or mesh) may be used if applied according to manufacturers' specification. Caution is advised when using nylon or other synthetic products. They may be difficult to remove prior to final seeding.

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STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR PERMANENT CRITICAL AREA PLANTINGS

Definition

Establishing grasses with other forbs and/or shrubs to provide perennial vegetative cover on disturbed, denuded, slopes subject to erosion.

Purpose

To reduce erosion and sediment transport.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

This practice applies to all disturbed areas void of, or having insufficient, cover to prevent erosion and sediment transport. See additional standards for special situations such as sand dunes and sand and gravel pits.

Criteria

All water control measures will be installed as needed prior to final grading and seedbed preparation. Any severely compacted sections will require chiseling or disking to provide an adequate rooting zone, to a minimum depth of 12". The seedbed must be prepared to allow good soil to seed contact, with the soil not too soft and not too compact. Adequate soil moisture must be present to accomplish this. If surface is powder dry or sticky wet, postpone operations until moisture changes to a favorable condition. If seeding is accomplished within 24 hours of final grading, additional scarification is generally not needed, especially on ditch or stream banks. Remove all stones and other debris from the surface that are greater than 4 inches, or that will interfere with future mowing or maintenance.

Soil amendments should be incorporated into the upper 2 inches of soil when feasible. **The soil should be tested to determine the amounts of amendments needed.** Apply ground agricultural limestone to attain a pH of 6.0 in the upper 2 inches of soil. If soil must be fertilized before results of a soil test can be obtained to determine fertilizer needs, apply commercial fertilizer at 600 lbs. per acre of 5-10-10 or equivalent. If manure is used, apply a quantity to meet the nutrients of the above fertilizer. This requires an appropriate manure analysis prior to applying to the site. Do not use manure on sites to be planted with birdsfoot trefoil or in the path of concentrated water flow.

Seed mixtures may vary depending on location within the state and time of seeding. Generally, warm season grasses should only be seeded during early spring, April to May. These grasses are primarily used for vegetating excessively drained sands and gravels. See Standard and Specification for Sand and Gravel Mine Reclamation. Other grasses may be seeded any time of the year when the soil is not frozen and is workable. When legumes such as birdsfoot trefoil are included, spring seedings are preferred. See Table 3.1 "Permanent Critical Area Planting Mixture Recommendations" for additional seed mixtures.

General Seed Mix:
[1] add inoculant immediately prior to seeding

	Variety	lbs./acre	lbs/1000 sq. ft.
Birdsfoot trefoil[1] OR	Empire/Pardee	8[2]	0.20
Common white clover[1]	Common	8	0.20
PLUS			
Tall fescue	KY-31/Rebel	20	0.45
PLUS			
Redtop OR	Common	2	0.05
Ryegrass (perennial)	Pennfine/Linn	5	0.10

[2] Mix 4 lbs each of Empire and Pardee OR 4 lbs of Birdsfoot and 4 lbs white clover per acre.

Time of Seeding: The optimum timing for the general seed mixture is early spring. Permanent seedings may be made any time of year if properly mulched and adequate moisture is provided. Late June through early August is not a good time to seed, but may facilitate covering the land without additional disturbance if construction is completed. Portions of the seeding may fail due to drought and heat. These areas may need reseeding in late summer/fall or the following spring.

Method of seeding: Broadcasting, drilling, cultipack type

seeding, or hydroseeding are acceptable methods. Proper soil to seed contact is key to successful seedings.

Mulching: Mulching is essential to obtain a uniform stand of seeded plants. Optimum benefits of mulching new seedings are obtained with the use of small grain straw applied at a rate of 2 tons per acre, and anchored with a netting or tackifier. See the mulch standard and specification for choices and requirements.

Irrigation: Watering may be essential to establish a new seeding when a drought condition occurs shortly after a new seeding emerges. Irrigation is a specialized practice and care must be taken not to exceed the application rate for the soil or subsoil. When disconnecting irrigation pipe, be sure pipes are drained in a safe manor, not creating an erosion concern.

Table 3.1
Permanent Critical Area Planting Mixture Recommendations

Seed mixture	Variety	Rate in lbs. per acre	Rate in lbs. Per 1000 sq. ft.
Mix #1			
Creeping red fescue	Ensylva, Pennlawn, Boreal	10	.25
Perennial ryegrass	Pennfine, Linn	10	.25

*This mix is used extensively for shaded areas.

Mix #2

Switchgrass	Shelter, Pathfinder, Trailblazer, or Blackwell	20	.5

*This rate is in pure live seed, this would be an excellent choice along the upland edge of a wetland to filter runoff and provide wildlife benefits. In areas where erosion may be a problem, a companion seeding of sand lovegrass should be added to provide quick cover at a rate of 2 lbs. per acre (0.05 lbs. per 1000 sq. ft.).

Mix #3

Switchgrass	Shelter, Pathfinder, Trailblazer, or Blackwell	4	.1
Big bluestem	Niagara	4	.1
Little bluestem	Aldous or Camper	2	.05
Indiangrass	Rumsey	4	.1
Coastal panicgrass	Atlantic	2	.05
Sideoats grama	El Reno or Trailway	2	.05
Wildflower mix		.5	.01

*This mix has been successful on sand and gravel plantings. It is very difficult to seed without a warm season grass seeder such as a Truax seed drill. Broadcasting this seed is very difficult due to the fluffy nature of some of the seed, such as bluestems and indiangrass.

Mix #4

Switchgrass	Shelter, Pathfinder Trailblazer, or Blackwell	10	.25
Coastal panicgrass	Atlantic	10	.25

*This mix is salt tolerant, a good choice along the upland edge of tidal areas and roadsides.

Mix #5

Saltmeadow cordgrass (Spartina patens)—This grass is used for tidal shoreline protection and tidal marsh restoration. It is planted by vegetative stem divisions.

'Cape' American beachgrass can be planted for sand dune stabilization above the saltmeadow cordgrass zone.

Mix #6

Creeping red fescue	Ensylva, Pennlawn, Boreal	20	.45
Tall fescue	KY 31, Rebel	20	.45
Perennial ryegrass	Pennfine, Linn	5	.10
Birdsfoot trefoil	Empire, Pardee	10	.45

*General purpose erosion control mix. Not to be used for a turf planting or play grounds.

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