



Objectives

EC	Erosion Control
SE	Sediment Control
TR	Tracking Control
WE	Wind Erosion Control
NS	Non-Stormwater Management Control
WM	Waste Management and Materials Pollution Control

Legend:

- ☒ Primary Objective
- ☒ Secondary Objective

Targeted Constituents

Sediment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nutrients	
Trash	
Metals	
Bacteria	
Oil and Grease	
Organics	

Potential Alternatives

None

Description and Purpose

Chemical treatment includes the application of chemicals to stormwater to aid in the reduction of turbidity caused by fine suspended sediment.

Suitable Applications

Chemical treatment can reliably provide exceptional reductions of turbidity and associated pollutants and should be considered where turbid discharges to sensitive wastes cannot be avoided using other BMPs. Typically, chemical use is limited to waters with numeric turbidity standards.

Limitations

The use of chemical treatment must have the advanced approval of the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

- Chemical Treatment of stormwater is relatively new and unproven technology in California.
- BMP has not been used often in California
- Petroleum based polymers should not be used
- Requires sediment basin or trailer mounted unit for chemical application
- Batch treatment required, flow through continuous treatment not allowed
- Requires large area



- Limited discharge rates depending on receiving water body
- Labor intensive operation and maintenance
- Requires monitoring for non-visible pollutants

Implementation

Turbidity is difficult to control once fine particles are suspended in stormwater runoff from a construction site. Sedimentation ponds are effective at removing larger particulate matter by gravity settling, but are ineffective at removing smaller particulates such as clay and fine silt. Sediment ponds are typically designed to remove sediment no smaller than medium silt (0.02 mm). Chemical treatment may be used to reduce the turbidity of stormwater runoff. Very high turbidities can be reduced to levels comparable to what is found in streams during dry weather.

Criteria for Chemical Treatment Product Use

Chemically treated stormwater discharged from construction sites must be non-toxic to aquatic organisms. The following protocol should be used to evaluate chemicals proposed for stormwater treatment at construction sites. Authorization to use a chemical in the field based on this protocol does not relieve the applicant from responsibility for meeting all discharge and receiving water criteria applicable to a site.

- Treatment chemicals must be approved by EPA for potable water use.
- Petroleum-based polymers are prohibited.
- Prior to authorization for field use, jar tests should be conducted to demonstrate that turbidity reduction necessary to meet the receiving water criteria could be achieved. Test conditions, including but not limited to raw water quality and jar test procedures, should be indicative of field conditions. Although these small-scale tests cannot be expected to reproduce performance under field conditions, they are indicative of treatment capability.
- Prior to authorization for field use, the chemically treated stormwater should be tested for aquatic toxicity. Applicable state or local Whole Effluent Toxicity Testing and Limits, should be used. Testing should use stormwater from the construction site at which the treatment chemical is proposed for use or a water solution using soil from the proposed site.
- The proposed maximum dosage should be at least a factor of five lower than the no observed effects concentration (NOEC).
- The approval of a proposed treatment chemical should be conditional, subject to full-scale bioassay monitoring of treated stormwater at the construction site where the proposed treatment chemical is to be used.
- Treatment chemicals that have already passed the above testing protocol do not need to be reevaluated. Contact the RWQCB for a list of treatment chemicals that may be approved for use.

Treatment System Design Considerations

The design and operation of a chemical treatment system should take into consideration the factors that determine optimum, cost-effective performance. It may not be possible to fully

incorporate all of the classic concepts into the design because of practical limitations at construction sites. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize the following:

- The right chemical must be used at the right dosage. A dosage that is either too low or too high will not produce the lowest turbidity. There is an optimum dosage rate. This is a situation where the adage “adding more is always better” is not the case.
- The coagulant must be mixed rapidly into the water to insure proper dispersion.
- Experience has found that sufficient flocculation occurs in the pipe leading from the point of chemical addition to the settling or sediment basin.
- Since the volume of the basin is a determinant in the amount of energy per unit volume, the size of the energy input system can be too small relative to the volume of the basin.
- Care must be taken in the design of the withdrawal system to minimize outflow velocities and to prevent floc discharge. The discharge should be directed through a physical filter such as vegetated swale that would catch any unintended floc discharge.
- A pH-adjusting chemical should be added into the sediment basin to control pH. Experience shows that the most common problem is low pH.

Treatment System Design

Chemical treatment systems should be designed as batch treatment systems using either ponds or portable trailer-mounted tanks. Flow-through continuous treatment systems are not allowed at this time.

A chemical treatment system consists of the stormwater collection system (either temporary diversion or the permanent site drainage system), a sediment basin or sediment trap, pumps, a chemical feed system, treatment cells, and interconnecting piping.

The treatment system should use a minimum of two lined treatment cells. Multiple treatment cells allow for clarification of treated water while other cells are being filled or emptied. Treatment cells may be basins, traps or tanks. Portable tanks may also be suitable for some sites.

The following equipment should be located in an operation shed:

- The chemical injector
- Secondary contaminant for acid, caustic, buffering compound, and treatment chemical
- Emergency shower and eyewash
- Monitoring equipment which consists of a pH meter and a turbidimeter

Sizing Criteria

The combination of the sediment basin or other holding area and treatment capacity should be large enough to treat stormwater during multiple day storm events. See SE-2, Sediment Basin, for design criteria. Bypass should be provided around the chemical treatment system to

accommodate extreme storm events. Runoff volume should be calculated using the Rational Method. Primary settling should be encouraged in the sediment basin/storage pond. A forebay with access for maintenance may be beneficial.

There are two opposing considerations in sizing the treatment cells. A larger cell is able to treat a larger volume of water each time a batch is processed. However, the larger the cell the longer the time required to empty the cell. A larger cell may also be less effective at flocculation and therefore require a longer settling time. The simplest approach to sizing the treatment cell is to multiply the allowable discharge flow rate times the desired drawdown time. A 4-hour drawdown time allows one batch per cell per 8-hour work period, given 1 hour of flocculation followed by 2 hours of settling.

The permissible discharge rate governed by potential downstream effect can be used to calculate the recommended size of the treatment cells. The following discharge flow rate limits apply absent any local requirements:

- If the discharge is direct or indirect to a stream, the discharge flow rate should not exceed 50 percent of the peak flow rate for all events between the 2-year and the 10-year, 24-hour event.
- If discharge is occurring during a storm event equal to or greater than the 10-year storm the allowable discharge rate is the peak flow rate of the 10-year, 24-hour event.
- Discharge to a stream should not increase the stream flow rate by more than 10 percent.
- If the discharge is directly to a lake or major receiving water there is no discharge flow limit.
- If the discharge is to a municipal storm drainage system, the allowable discharge rate may be limited by the capacity of the public system. It may be necessary to clean the municipal storm drainage system prior to the start of the discharge to prevent scouring solids from the drainage system.
- Runoff rates may be calculated using the Rational Method, unless another method is required by the local flood control agency or agency that issued the grading permit.

Costs

Costs for chemical treatment may be significant due to equipment required and cost of chemicals. The cost is offset by the ability to reduce some use of other onsite erosion control BMPs and the reuse of equipment (e.g., pumps and dosing equipment). The incremental cost is generally less than 1% of the total construction costs.

Inspection and Maintenance

Chemical treatment systems must be operated and maintained by individuals with expertise in their use. Chemical treatment systems should be monitored continuously while in use.

The following monitoring should be conducted. Test results should be recorded on a daily log kept on site.

Operational Monitoring

- pH conductivity (as a surrogate for alkalinity), turbidity, and temperature of the untreated stormwater
- Total volume treated and discharged
- Discharge time and flow rate
- Type and amount of chemical used for pH adjustment
- Amount of polymer used for treatment
- Settling time

Compliance Monitoring

- pH and turbidity of the treated stormwater
- pH and turbidity of the receiving water

Bio-monitoring

Treated stormwater should be tested for acute (lethal) toxicity. Bioassays should be conducted by a laboratory accredited by the State of California. **The performance standard for acute toxicity is no statistically significant difference in survival between the control and 100 percent chemically treated stormwater.**

Acute toxicity tests should be conducted with the following species and protocols:

- Fathead minnow, *Pimephales promelas* (96 hour static-renewal test, method: EPA/600/4-90/027F). Rainbow trout, *Oncorhynchus mykiss* (96 hour static-renewal test, method: EPA/600/4-90/027F) may be used as a substitute for fathead minnow.
- Daphnid, *Ceriodaphnia dubia*, *Daphnia pulex*, or *Daphnia magna* (48 hour static test, method: EPA/600/4-90/027F).

All toxicity tests should meet quality assurance criteria and test conditions in the most recent versions of the EPA test method.

Bioassays should be performed on the first five batches and on every tenth batch thereafter or as otherwise approved by the RWQCB. Failure to meet the performance standard should be immediately reported to the RWQCB.

Discharge Compliance:

Prior to discharge, each batch of treated stormwater must be sampled and tested for compliance with pH and turbidity limits. These limits may be established by the water quality standards or a site-specific discharge permit. Sampling and testing for other pollutants may also be necessary at some sites. Turbidity must be within 5 NTUs of the background turbidity. Background is measured in the receiving water, upstream from the treatment process discharge point. pH must be within the range of 6.5 to 8.5 standard units and not cause a change in the pH of the receiving water of more than 0.2 standard units. It is often

possible to discharge treated stormwater that has a lower turbidity than the receiving water and that matches the pH.

Treated stormwater samples and measurements should be taken from the discharge pipe or another location representative of the nature of the treated stormwater discharge. Samples used for determining compliance with the water quality standards in the receiving water should not be taken from the treatment pond to decanting. Compliance with the water quality standards is determined in the receiving water.

Operator Training:

Each contractor who intends to use chemical treatment should be trained by an experienced contractor on an active site for at least 40 hours.

Standard BMPs:

Erosion and sediment control BMPs should be implemented throughout the site to prevent erosion and discharge of sediment.

Sediment Removal and Disposal

- Sediment should be removed from the storage or treatment cells as necessary. Typically, sediment removal is required at least once during a wet season and at the decommissioning of the cells. Sediment remaining in the cells between batches may enhance the settling process and reduce the required chemical dosage.
- Sediment may be incorporated into the site away from drainages.

References

Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington, Volume II – Construction
Stormwater Pollution Prevention, Washington State Department of Ecology, August 2001.

Stormwater Quality Handbooks - Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs) Manual,
State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), November 2000.