



EROSION AND SEDIMENT CONTROL:

Environmental Stewardship in Action

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◀ *Stream crossing and silt fence installed for construction access. Photo courtesy of ECI.*

Since every construction site is unique, a plan tailored to the site-specific requirements is necessary. The course-of-action plan outlines the erosion and sediment controls needed to mitigate sediment relocation. Some standard controls are silt sock, silt fence, and berms. These measures are incorporated into the plan and are installed before construction. Other needs may include mats and bridges to eliminate degradation when crossing streams and entering wetlands. In addition to the site assessment, all permits must be obtained from local, state, and federal regulatory agencies. The course-of-action plan, inspection logs, and permits are all included in a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). This book is a live repository maintained throughout the project's life.

STAGE 2: EXECUTE

By this point in the process, an oversight representative is assigned to ensure the proper installation of controls to the guidelines outlined in the SWPPP. This representative oversees the site from control installation to rehabilitation. An installation company installs all necessary environmental controls per the site plan. The oversight

*Fully rehabilitated construction site.
Photo courtesy of ECI.*

Environmental stewardship is pivotal in a utility's environmental, social, and governance strategy. It is a risk not to consider the environmental implications of construction, maintenance, and day-to-day operations. Utilities must consider the environmental impacts of access and construction to prevent an environmental event and comply with local, state, and federal regulations. Today, most states have explicit standards for land disturbance and guidelines for mitigation. These plans are in place to prevent water pollution, which can have devastating impacts on streams and vital water sources. Fortunately, proven strategies have been implemented that mitigate the risks associated with land disturbance. Environmental Consultants (ECI) and our utility partners have a course of action to properly plan, execute, and rehabilitate sites that require land disturbance. Each one of these stages is interdependent and is integral to the success of environmental stewardship.

STAGE 1: PLAN

Mitigation and control efforts begin in the planning stages. Site surveys and assessments by trained professionals reveal the environmental conditions. Features such as slopes, wetlands, endangered species, and streams determine the course of action. Tools such as topography maps, wetland delineation, and regulations determine the requirements for the site. The construction scope of work is also considered. When determining areas of impact, the asset which needs to be accessed, its access points, and easement factors are also considered.





▲ Work pad stabilized with seed and straw after construction was completed. Photo courtesy of ECI.

representative monitors progress and inspects the site once the installation is complete. Once the site aligns with the site plan, construction can begin. The oversight representative will periodically inspect the site to ensure the controls are in working order during construction. These inspections are logged in the SWPPP and updates are made as required. If repairs or changes need to be made, the representative will take action to ensure compliance. During this time, the site may be inspected by internal or external parties. These inspections are to ensure that the site meets the requirements dictated by the permit and regulatory bodies. The consequences of a failed inspection can mean the revocation of a permit and/or fines. This can completely stop the project and lead to costly remediation. Maintaining compliance is vital, and having an oversight representative keeps the project on track.

STAGE 3: REHABILITATE

Environmental stewardship doesn't stop once the construction is complete. Site rehabilitation ensures that the site is left in a state that is comparable, if not improved. Temporary bridges and mats are removed from the site. The oversight representative oversees the rehabilitation stage, ensuring the site is restored to its natural state by implementing the appropriate tools. Depending on the site, the restoration could include laying sod, hydroseeding, spreading special wetlands seeds, and planting trees. The oversight representative will continue to monitor the site after planting—the site is not entirely rehabilitated until it returns to its original state.

CONCLUSION

A responsible approach to land disturbance affirms a utility's commitment to environmental stewardship. As a component of ESG, having environmentally conscious methods to manage construction projects is necessary to reduce impacts on stakeholders. Planning, executing, and rehabilitating are stages that fulfill construction needs while minimizing environmental impacts. ECI is proud to support our utility partners in these efforts and looks forward to continued progress in environmental stewardship. ♻️

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