DRY SWALES

CVC/TRCA LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING AND DESIGN GUIDE - FACT SHEET

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

A dry swale can be thought of as an enhanced grass swale that incorporates an engineered filter media bed and optional perforated pipe underdrain or a bioretention cell configured as a linear open channel. They can also be referred to as infiltration swales or bio-swales. Dry swales are similar to enhanced grass swales in terms of the design of their surface geometry, slope, check dams and pretreatment devices. They are similar to bioretention cells in terms of the design of the filter media bed, gravel storage layer and optional underdrain. In general, they are open channels designed to convey, treat and attenuate stormwater runoff. Vegetation or aggregate material on the surface of the swale slows the runoff water to allow sedimentation, filtration through the root zone and engineered soil bed, evapotranspiration, and infiltration into the underlying native soil.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

GEOMETRY AND SITE LAYOUT

- SHAPE: A parabolic shape is preferable for aesthetic, maintenance and hydraulic reasons. However, design may be simplified with a trapezoidal cross-section as long as the engineered soil (filter media) bed boundaries lay in the flat bottom areas. Swale length between culverts should be 5 metres or greater.
- BOTTOM WIDTH: For the trapezoidal cross section, the bottom width should be between 0.75 and 2 metres. When greater widths are desired, bioretention cell designs should be used.
- SIDE SLOPES: Should be no steeper than 3:1 for maintenance considerations (mowing). Flatter slopes are encouraged where adequate space is available to provide pretreatment for sheet flows entering the swale.
- LONGITUDINAL SLOPE: Should be as gradual as possible to permit the temporary ponding of the water quality storage requirement. Should be designed with longitudinal slopes generally ranging from 0.5 to 4%, and no greater than 6%. On slopes steeper than 3%, check dams should be used. Check dam spacing should be based on the slope and desired ponding volume. They should be spaced far enough apart to allow access for maintenance equipment (e.g., mowers).

PRE-TREATMENT

Pretreatment prevents premature clogging by capturing coarse sediments before they reach the filter bed. Where runoff source areas produce little sediment, such as roofs, dry swales can function effectively without pretreatment. To treat parking area or road runoff, a two-cell design that incorporates a forebay is recommended. Pretreatment practices that may be feasible, depending on conveyance method and availability of space include:

- SEDIMENTATION FOREBAY (TWO-CELL DESIGN): Forebay ponding volume should account for 25% of the water quality storage requirement and be designed with a 2:1 length to width ratio.
- VEGETATED FILTER STRIP (SHEET FLOW): Should ideally be a minimum of three (3) metres in width. If smaller strips are used, more frequent maintenance of the filter bed can be anticipated.
- GRAVEL DIAPHRAGM (SHEET FLOW): A small trench filled with pea gravel, which is perpendicular to the flow path between the edge of the pavement and the dry swale will promote settling out of sediment and maintain sheet flow into the facility. A drop of 50-150 mm into the gravel diaphragm can be used to dissipate energy and promote settling.
- RIP RAP AND/OR DENSE VEGETATION (CHANNEL FLOW): Suitable for small dry swales with drainage areas less than 100 square metres.

GRAVEL STORAGE LAYER

- DEPTH: Should be a minimum of 300 mm deep and sized to provide the required storage volume. Granular material should be 50 mm diameter clear stone.
- PEA GRAVEL CHOKING LAYER: A 100 mm deep layer of pea gravel (3 to 10 mm diameter clear stone) should be placed on top of the coarse gravel storage layer as a choking layer separating it from the overlying filter media bed.

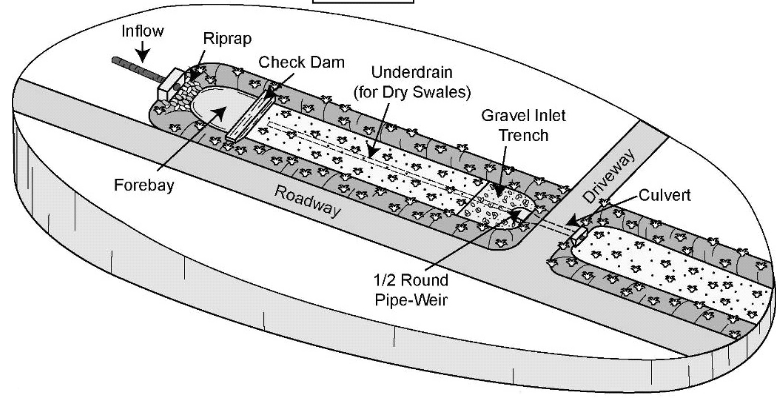
FILTER MEDIA

- COMPOSITION: To ensure a consistent and homogeneous bed, filter media should come pre-mixed from an approved vendor.
- DEPTH: Recommended depth is between 1.0 and 1.25 m. However in constrained applications, pollutant removal benefits may be achieved in beds as shallow as 500 mm. If trees are to be included in the design, bed depth must be at least 1.0 m.
- MULCH: A 75 mm layer of mulch on the surface of the filter bed enhances plant survival, suppresses weed growth and pretreats runoff before it reaches the filter bed.

UNDERDRAIN

- Only needed where native soil infiltration rate is less than 15 mm/hr (hydraulic conductivity of less than 1x10-6 cm/s).
- Should consist of a perforated pipe embedded in the coarse gravel storage layer at least 100 mm above the bottom.
- A strip of geotextile filter fabric placed between the filter media and pea gravel choking layer over the perforated pipe is optional to help prevent fine soil particles from entering the underdrain.
- A vertical standpipe connected to the underdrain at the furthest downstream end of the swale can be used as a cleanout and monitoring well.

Swales



ABILITY TO MEET SWM OBJECTIVES

BMP	Water Balance Benefit	Water Quality Improvement	Stream Channel Erosion Control Benefit
Dry swale with no underdrain or full infiltration	Yes	Yes - size for water quality storage requirement	Partial - based on available storage volume and soil infiltration rate
Dry swale with underdrain or partial infiltration	Partial - based on available storage volume beneath the underdrain and soil infiltration rate	Yes - size for water quality storage requirement	Partial - based on available storage volume beneath the underdrain and soil infiltration rate
Dry swale with underdrain and impermeable liner or no infiltration	Partial - some volume reduction through evapotranspiration	Yes - size for water quality storage requirement	Partial - some volume reduction through evapotranspiration

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Dry swales require routine inspection and maintenance of the landscaping as well as periodic inspection for less frequent maintenance needs or remedial maintenance. Generally, routine maintenance will be the same as for any other landscaped area; weeding, pruning, and litter removal. Regular watering may be required during the first two years until vegetation is established.

For the first two years following construction the facility should be inspected at least quarterly and after every major storm event (> 25 mm). Subsequently, inspections should be conducted in the spring and fall of each year and after major storm events. Inspect for vegetation density (at least 80% coverage), damage by foot or vehicular traffic, channelization, accumulation of debris, trash and sediment, and structural damage to pretreatment devices.

Trash and debris should be removed from pretreatment devices, the dry swale surface and inlet and outlets at least twice annually. Other maintenance activities include reapplying mulch, pruning, weeding replacing dead vegetation and repairing eroded areas as needed. Remove accumulated sediment on the dry swale surface when dry and exceeding 25 mm depth.

CONVEYANCE AND OVERFLOW

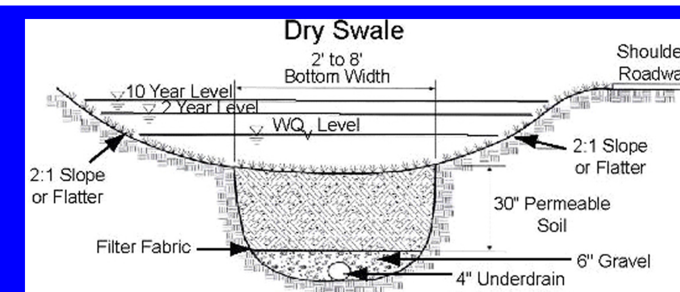
Should be designed for a maximum velocity of 0.5 m/s or less for a 4 hour 25 mm Chicago storm event. The swale should also convey the locally required design storm (usually the 10 year storm) at non-erosive velocities with freeboard provided above the required design storm water level.

MONITORING WELLS

A capped vertical standpipe consisting of an anchored 100 to 150 millimetre diameter perforated pipe with a lockable cap installed to the bottom of the facility at the furthest downgradient end is recommended for monitoring the length of time required to fully drain the facility between storms.

GENERAL SPECIFICATIONS

Material	Specification	Quantity
Filter Media Composition	Filter Media Soil Mixture to contain: • 85 to 88% sand • 8 to 12% soil fines • 3 to 5% organic matter (leaf compost) Other Criteria: • Phosphorus soil test index (P-Index) value between 10 to 30 ppm • Cationic exchange capacity (CEC) greater than 10 meq/100 g • Free of stones, stumps, roots and other large debris • pH between 5.5 to 7.5 • Infiltration rate greater than 25 mm/hr.	Volumetric computation based on surface area and depth used in design computations
Geotextile	Material specifications should conform to Ontario Provincial Standard Specification (OPSS) 1860 for Class II geotextile fabrics. Should be woven monofilament or non-woven needle punched fabrics. Woven slit film and non-woven heat bonded fabrics should not be used as they are prone to clogging. For further guidance see CVC/TRCA LID SWM Planning and Design Guide, Table 4.9.4.	Strip over the perforated pipe underdrain (if present) between the filter media bed and gravel storage layer (stone reservoir).
Gravel	Washed 50 mm diameter clear stone with void space ratio of 0.4 should be used to surround the underdrain.	Volumetric computation based on depth.
Underdrain (optional)	Perforated HDPE or equivalent material, minimum 100 mm dia., 200 mm dia. recommended. Set pipe invert at least 100 mm above bottom of the gravel layer.	• Perforated pipe for length of dry swale. • Non-perforated pipe to connect with storm drain system. • One or more caps. • T's for underdrain
Check Dams	• Should be constructed of a non-erosive material such as wood, gabions, riprap, or concrete and underlain with filter fabric. • Wood used should consist of pressure treated logs or timbers, or water-resistant tree species such as cedar, hemlock, swamp oak or locust.	Computation of check dam material needed based on surface area and depth used in design computations
Mulch or Matting	• Shredded hardwood bark mulch • Where flow velocities dictate, use erosion and sediment control matting - coconut fiber or equivalent.	Mulch - A 75 mm layer on the surface of the filter bed. Matting - based on filter bed area.



SITE CONSIDERATIONS

Available Space
Footprints are 5 to 15% of their contributing drainage area. Swale length between culverts should be 5m or greater.

Site Topography
Longitudinal slopes ranging from 0.5 to 4%. On slopes steeper than 3%, check dams should be used.

Drainage Area and Runoff Volume to Site
Typically treat drainage areas of two hectares or less. Typical ratios of impervious drainage area to treatment facility area range from 5:1 to 15:1.

Soil
Dry swales can be located over any soil type, but hydrologic soil group A and B soils are best for achieving water balance benefits. Facilities should be located in portions of the site with the highest native soil infiltration rates. Where infiltration rates are less than 15 mm/hr (hydraulic conductivity less than 1x10-6 cm/s) an underdrain is required. Native soil infiltration rate at the proposed facility location and depth should be confirmed through measurement of hydraulic conductivity under field saturated conditions.

Wellhead Protection
Facilities receiving road or parking lot runoff should not be located within two (2) year time-of-travel wellhead protection areas.

Water Table
The bottom of the swale should be separated from the seasonally high water table or top of bedrock elevation by at least one (1) metre to prevent groundwater contamination.

Pollution Hot Spot Runoff
To protect groundwater from possible contamination, runoff from pollution hot spots should not be treated dry swales designed for full or partial infiltration. Facilities designed with an impermeable liner (filtration only facilities) can be used to treat runoff from pollution hot spots.

Setback from Buildings
Should be set back four (4) metres from building foundations unless an impermeable liner and underdrain system is used.

Proximity to Underground Utilities
Designers should consult local utility design guidance for the horizontal and vertical clearance between storm drains, ditches, and surface water bodies.

CONSTRUCTION CONSIDERATIONS

Ideally, dry swale sites should remain outside the limit of disturbance until construction of the swale begins to prevent soil compaction by heavy equipment. Dry swale locations should never be used as the site of sediment basins during construction, as the concentration of fines will prevent post-construction infiltration. To prevent clogging, stormwater should be diverted away from the practice until the drainage area is fully stabilized.

TORONTO AND REGION Conservation for The Living City

CVC CREDIT VALLEY CONSERVATION

FOR FURTHER DETAILS SEE SECTION 4.9 OF THE CVC/TRCA LID SWM GUIDE