


DATE: November 24, 2010

TO: Regional Water Leaders, Basin Leaders and Experts  
Storm Water Permit Staff (via email)

FROM: Russ Rasmussen, Director, Bureau of Watershed Management  
DNR Storm Water Permit Engineers 

SUBJECT: Process to Assess and Model Grass Swales for ss. NR 151.13(2) and NR 216.07(6), Wis. Adm. Code  
- Total Suspended Solids Reduction

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#### Issue

Under s. NR 151.13(2), Wis. Adm. Code, a municipality subject to the municipal storm water permit requirements of s. NR 216.07(6), Wis. Adm. Code, must implement a 20% reduction in total suspended solids (TSS), by March 10, 2008 or 24 months from coverage under the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) general permit, and a 40% TSS reduction by March 10, 2013. This memorandum provides DNR staff with guidance to advise affected municipalities and their consultants on how to evaluate grassed swales in the developed urban area for water quality credit. (This guidance does not address design of grassed swales to serve new development. The Vegetated Infiltration Swale, Interim Technical Standard, No. 1005 provides information on construction of new grassed swales.)

#### Discussion

To meet the requirements of the MS4 permit and the TSS reduction goal of s. NR 151.13(2), Wis. Adm. Code, a municipality must assess existing best management practices (BMPs) for TSS control and propose additional BMPs if the performance standard cannot be met with existing practices. One BMP available to many permitted municipalities is the grassed swale. This guidance provides a basis for assessing and modeling swales for TSS reduction to foster consistent application of this practice in all permitted municipalities. The goals of this guidance are to:

- Determine which water quality swales in the MS4 are eligible to receive TSS reduction credit, and
- Identify a typical swale geometry that can be considered representative. (It may be appropriate to develop more than one typical swale geometry if the swale characteristics in the MS4 are highly variable.)

#### DNR Guidance

**Step 1.** Identify which swales in the municipality can be considered water quality swales for the purpose of meeting the 20% and 40% TSS reduction goal.

The following apply to all swales in the developed urban area if they are to be considered water quality swales:

- A. Swales are not required to have pretreatment swales or equivalent pretreatment.
- B. The longitudinal slope must be less than 4% unless slope interruption devices are installed in the swales to ensure low flow velocities. Slope interruption devices must be consistent with Ditch Check Technical

Standard, No. 1062. Swales with slope interruption devices will be evaluated using a modified longitudinal slope of 1%.

- C. The Department is concerned about channel scouring and re-suspension of previously settled particles in swales that are being used for MS4 pollutant removal credit. To address this concern, all swales should be inspected for visual evidence of scour. Swales with visual evidence of scour, such as channel cuts in the bottom or areas of bare soil, can not be included.

There are two ways of identifying water quality swales within an MS4:

- A. If swale survey data is available, determine the locations of water quality swales and arrive at typical swale geometry based on statistical methods.
- B. In the absence of survey data, a desktop and field survey would be appropriate. The desktop and field procedure is as follows:
1. Identify potential water quality swale areas by using available topographic, land use and soil information.
  2. Based on results of the desktop evaluation, select a representative number of typical swale locations in the MS4 by conducting a field survey. A minimum of five locations should be selected. At each location:
    - Measure the width of the swale bottom using a tape measure.
    - For side slopes, measure the vertical drop over the level length using a carpenter's level and tape measure.
    - Select at least three cross-sections of the swale and average the results to determine the bottom width and side slopes.
    - Determine longitudinal slope using 2-ft contour mapping or other available topographic information.
  3. Use the typical swale geometry that best represents each drainage area.

**Step 2.** Model the swales identified in **Step 1.** using a model such as SLAMM or P8.

When modeling swales in SLAMM or P8 the following must be considered:

**How should drainage basins with a mix of swale and storm sewer conveyance systems be evaluated?**

Drainage basins with a combination of swales and storm sewer should be subdivided by conveyance system type and the subdivisions modeled separately. In SLAMM, swales need to be modeled separately because drainage system type (e.g., swale vs. storm sewer) cannot be assigned to individual source areas.

Where swale density varies within a modeled area, the swale density should be an area weighted average across the model area. For example, if a 100 acre modeled area has 90 acres of residential land use with an average swale density of 359 ft/acre and 10 acres of strip commercial with an average swale density of 412 ft/acre then the area weighted average across modeled area is  $[(90 \times 359) + (10 \times 412)] / 100 = 364$  ft/acre.

Table 1 identifies the average swale density used in the standard land use files from SLAMM version 9.2. It is recommended that rather than using these averages, the municipality should identify the actual swale density for each of the representative areas.

**TABLE 1**

<u>Land use</u>	<u>Swale Density (ft/acre)</u>
Low density residential	238
Medium density residential	359
High density residential	385
Strip commercial	412
Shopping centers	92
Industrial	265
Freeway (Shoulder only)	1309
Freeway (Shoulder and Center)	1964

Note: These average swale density figures are from the SLAMM version 9.2 Standard Land Use files available on the USGS website at: <http://wi.water.usgs.gov/slamm/>

**Should swales be modeled using the “wetted perimeter” or “typical swale geometry” option?**

The typical swale geometry option must be used. Both SLAMM and P8 calculate wetted perimeter from the geometry for each storm event, which is more accurate than a user selected defined wetted perimeter.

**What Manning’s “n” should be used for the typical swale geometry<sup>1</sup>?**

A Manning’s “n” value of 0.30 or less is recommended, based on type of vegetation, mowing height and depth of flow. Supporting documentation should be provided if Manning’s “n” values greater than 0.30 are used

**How should the infiltration rate be determined?**

The guidance provided in the Site Evaluation for Stormwater Infiltration Technical Standard, No. 1002 should be followed. The swale infiltration rate should be determined based on the representative soil texture identified in the NRCS soil survey or other soil data if available. When the representative soil texture has been determined, the appropriate design infiltration rate should be selected from Table 2 of the Technical Standard, No. 1002. If the infiltration rate is measured in the field using a scientifically credible field test method, the measured value can be used for the static infiltration rate without using the correction factors in Table 3 of Technical Standard, No. 1002. **Prior to entering an infiltration rate in the model, the design infiltration rate from Table 2, or the measured infiltration rate must be reduced by 50%.** The SLAMM default “infiltration rate by soil type” values should not be used.

**Existing language in Technical Standard 1002 V. Step C. 4.b indicates that a measured infiltration rate using a double-ring infiltrometer test must follow the requirements of ASTM D3385. While this may be appropriate for designing new swales, is there any flexibility for measuring an existing swale using a double-ring infiltrometer test?**

To determine the static infiltration rate of existing swales using a double-ring infiltrometer the following modifications to procedures in ASTM D3385 are allowed:

While the dimension and materials used for the double-ring should be based on the requirements of ASTM D3385, the infiltration rate can be measured in a time frame of a minimum of 2 hours instead of 24 hours and the water level in both rings does not have to stay constant during the test. The following procedure is a more cost-effective

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<sup>1</sup> SLAMM version 9.3 will adjust Manning’s “n” based on flow, swale geometry and vegetative retardance classifications

approach to obtaining a reasonable estimate of the infiltration rate of existing grass swales. For most soil types the infiltration rate measured by the procedure should represent the soils under more saturated conditions. Sandier soil types might not be represented by saturated conditions, but the higher infiltration rate will probably represent reality for the duration of most storm events. The lowest infiltration rate observed is the one to be used for estimating the TSS reduction for the swales and is considered a static infiltration rate. The static rate should be cut in half to represent the dynamic infiltration rate in the model.

#### Field Test Procedure for Double-Ring Infiltrometer

1. Select a relatively flat test area so that the double-ring infiltrometer will not be placed at an angle.
2. Cut the grass to a height of between two to four inches.
3. Gently drive the infiltrometer into the ground.
4. Inspect the soil seal around each ring to make sure that it is even and smooth.
5. Pour clean water into the inner chamber and allow it to overflow and fill up the outer ring. Maintain a level in the outer ring approximately equal to the level in the inner ring.
6. Add more water to both rings when the level in the inner ring has dropped a measurable amount. For most soil types this should be less than an inch.
7. Repeat this step until the rate the water level drops begins to decline.
8. When the rate of decline begins to slow, bring the water level up to the top and start timing the decrease in water level.
9. Record the start time.
10. Stop timing when the water level in the inner ring has gone down a measureable level (the ASTM standard requires keeping the water level constant). Timing the rate of decline should probably be started almost immediately for more clayey soils, since it might be difficult to observe when the rate change has slowed.
11. Record the time, elapsed time, and change in water level.
12. Refill both rings and restart the timing.
13. Record the time, elapsed time, change in water level, and the elapsed time since the beginning of the first measurement.
14. Repeat the timing steps until the infiltration rate has become relatively constant or the test has been conducted for a minimum of two hours. (The ASTM standard requires 24 hours).
15. The measured rate of infiltration is considered a static infiltration rate. The dynamic infiltration rate is  $\frac{1}{2}$  the static rate. Be aware some models, such as WinSLAMM, call for the dynamic rate for swales.

**I have taken a number of measurements along a swale length and have several infiltration rates to average. How do I average the results of my in-field tests?**

The geometric mean(s) of infiltration testing results should be used. However, equally important is to consider whether the measured infiltration rates should be 'grouped' in order to apply separate geometric means to different areas in order to provide representative TSS results across a municipality. Grouping of results might be done based on soil type, spatial reasons or simply done as a method to help provide representative results. For instance, if there are several relatively low infiltration rates measured and the geometric mean of the entire data set is quite high, it may be prudent to group the relatively low rates together and assign them to a representative area.

Note: In order to calculate a geometric mean, the data set of values must be greater than zero. Where the infiltration rate is too low to measure, a rate of 0.03 in/hr may be used to calculate a geometric mean of the data set.

**Are velocity calculations required?**

The swales that were not eliminated by visual inspection should be evaluated for scour and re-suspension using the results of velocity or shear stress calculations conducted at the representative swale locations

from **Step 1**. Velocity or shear stress calculations should be conducted based on the peak discharge rate for a 2-yr, 24-hr design event (or a reasonably equivalent event from the SLAMM or P8 rainfall file for the area) to verify that scour and re-suspension will not be a problem.

**Do water quality swales need to meet the slope parameters identified in Vegetated Infiltration Swale, Interim Technical Standard, No. 1005?**

If functioning as vegetated conveyance systems, swales with longitudinal slope less than 1% can be used. However, there is concern that swales with slopes less than 1% can clog. Where visual evidence indicates that the infiltration rate has been reduced (e.g., significant duration of ponded water or evidence of wetland vegetation), infiltration rates appropriate for clay soils should be used.

**How do I model road runoff that sheet flows off the road and is dispersed with no apparent concentrated flow path?**

For roads where runoff sheet flows off to the side of the road and is dispersed into adjacent pervious areas with no concentrated flow path in the vicinity, the roadway would be considered a disconnected impervious surface. Currently, SLAMM does not have the option of disconnecting a roadway, whereas rooftops and driveways can be disconnected. Therefore, an alternative method is needed to give treatment credit for such a system. If there is no concentrated flow path near the roadway and the runoff is dispersed as sheet flow across healthy vegetated areas, model this as a very broad, flat swale unless there is an option to model it as a vegetated filter strip.

Approved By:



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