

# Sediment and Erosion Control For New Homeowners



“Wattle The Duck”

If your new home is like most, the builder did some grading of your lot, removing some or all of the existing vegetation or ground cover. You may have new sod, or you might just have a bare soil yard. When rain falls on exposed soil, it can wash soil away from the land. This runoff can erode bare ground, wash away valuable topsoil and make landscaping more difficult. It also carries soil, nutrients and other pollutants into streets, gutters and ditches, where it then travels untreated to lakes, rivers, streams or wetlands. Polluted runoff can cause excessive growth of weeds and algae in water bodies and reduce recreational opportunities such as swimming and fishing. Sediment-laden runoff can also clog ponds and wetlands and reduce floodwater retention.

Your homebuilder was required to take steps to keep soil and sediment from leaving your lot. Permanent stabilization such as sod may have been installed on part or all of your property. If not, you can help protect the environment by ensuring that soil and sediment are not washed off your property and that grass or other ground cover become well established.

## **Temporary stabilization**

When construction on your home is complete, verify that your builder installed temporary stabilization measures to minimize erosion and prevent sediment-laden runoff from discharging into streets, gutters, ditches, streams, lakes and wetlands. Sediment control should be in place on the down slope perimeter, and near curb and gutters, ditches, streams, and wetlands. Soil piles must also be stabilized.

## **Types of Temporary Stabilization include:**

**Temporary vegetation** includes annual grasses that sprout quickly such as annual rye, oats and winter wheat. These grow quickly with little care and can protect the soil from rain, slow runoff, and act as a filter. They will not provide permanent cover. You may need to fertilize, water or reseed to ensure the vegetative cover is maintained until permanent cover is installed.

**Mulching** (straw, wood chips, wood fiber blanket) provides temporary cover to protect the soil from rain. Mulching may be the only option during the winter when seeding or sodding is not possible. Mulch must stay in place to be effective. Netting, stakes or chemical binders are used to anchor some types of mulch. Be sure to reinstall washed-out mulch and anchor if necessary until permanent cover is established.

**Straw wattles** are tubes of straw used for erosion control, sediment control and storm water runoff control. These devices help to stabilize slopes by shortening the slope length and by slowing, spreading and filtering overland water flow. Straw Wattles capture sediment and hold it on site enabling seeds to settle and germinate, further aiding final vegetation. Wattles will give slope protection for 3 to 5 years as they slowly decompose into mulch, and the netting breaks down into little pieces. This is what Wattle the Duck was named after (see above).

**Downspout extenders** may be used to protect temporarily stabilized areas from roof runoff. Extenders can direct water from your roof gutters to paved or grassed areas. Check extenders regularly to insure proper performance. Remove extenders following permanent stabilization.

**Silt fences** are curtains of permeable fabric on stakes to restrict run off. The silt fence slows runoff and allows it to puddle or pond, so soil and sediment can settle out before water leaves a site. Proper installation and maintenance of sediment control devices is essential for their performance. Reinstall or replace ripped, collapsed, undermined or decomposed fencing. Remove sediment if deposits reach 1/3 of the silt fence height. Remove silt fences and other sediment control devices only after permanent stabilization is established.



## Permanent stabilization

Establish permanent vegetation or ground cover as soon as possible. Mulch, silt fences, downspout extenders, or other temporary stabilization measures can be removed following permanent stabilization.

### Please consider the following as you make your landscaping decisions:

- Keep and protect existing native trees, bushes and plants on your property.
- Schedule landscaping projects for dry weather.
- Terrace slopes to slow the flow of runoff.
- Plant fast-growing annual and perennial grasses.
- Water new seed or sod lightly, every day or two, for two weeks to keep soil moist.
- Use well adapted native plants that reduce runoff and require little maintenance.
- Plant plenty of trees and shrubs to reduce runoff.
- Plant lawn alternatives like rain gardens, prairie plants, or no mow lawn mixes.
- Route downspouts and other drainage to heavily vegetated areas.
- Use crushed rocks, pavers or other alternatives that allow rainwater to seep into the ground for walkways, RV pads, decks, patios and drives.
- Leave an unmowed buffer strip of thick vegetation along stream banks and lakeshores.
- Use caution when landscaping near your home, especially next to the foundation. Changes in the final grade can lead to water pooling and basement water damage.
- Use a landscaping firm experienced in stormwater design.
- Check with your local government to make sure your landscape design meets any local regulations.

## Controlling Storm Water Pollution

Finally, you can also help area waterways for as long as you own your home. Storm water runoff does not go to a wastewater treatment plant. It flows directly into our streams and rivers. There are many ways you can reduce polluted runoff.

- Keep trash, leaves and grass clippings off streets and out of storm drains, streams and rivers.
- Keep cars tuned up and repair leaks.
- Properly dispose of hazardous wastes.
- Don't pour oil, pesticides, paint or other materials down the storm drain.
- Minimize the use of pesticides, fertilizers and de-icing materials.
- Pick up and bury or flush pet wastes.
- Wash your car on the lawn or use a commercial car wash.



City of Bismarck, Public Works  
Storm Water Program  
601 South 26<sup>th</sup> Street  
Bismarck, ND 58506-5503

[www.bismarcknd.gov](http://www.bismarcknd.gov)  
701-355-1700; option 0

**NOTE: As a homeowner, you are responsible for inspecting and maintaining temporary stabilization measures until permanent ground cover is established on your yard.**