APPENDIX B BMP DESIGN CRITERIA

B.1 BIORETENTION FACILITY

DESCRIPTION

Bioretention is a best management practice (BMP) developed in the early 1990's by the Prince George's County, MD, Department of Environmental Resources (PGDER). Bioretention utilizes soils and both woody and herbaceous plants to remove pollutants from stormwater runoff. As shown in Figure 1, runoff is conveyed as sheet flow to the treatment area, which consists of a grass buffer strip, sand bed, ponding area, organic layer or mulch layer, planting soil, and plants. Runoff passes first over or through a sand bed, which slows the runoff's velocity, distributes it evenly along the length of the ponding area, which consists of a surface organic layer and/or ground cover and the underlying planting soil. The ponding area is graded; its center depressed. Water is ponded to a depth of 6 inches and gradually infiltrates the bioretention area and/or is evapotranspired. Bioretention areas are applicable as on-lot retention facilities that are designed to mimic forested systems that naturally control hydrology. The bioretention area is graded to drain excess runoff over a weir and into the storm drain system. Stored water in the bioretention area planting soil infiltrates over a period of days into the underlying soils.

The basic bioretention design shown in Figure 1 can be modified to accommodate more specific needs. The bioretention BMP design can be modified to include an underdrain within the sand bed to collect the infiltrated water and discharge it to a downstream storm drain system. This modification may be required when impervious subsoils and marine clays prevent complete infiltration in the soil system. This modified design makes the bioretention area act more as a filter that discharges treated water than as an infiltration device.

There are six basic components of a bioretention facility:

(1) Grass Buffer Strip	-	Designed to filter out particulates and reduce runoff velocity.
(2) Sand Bed	-	Further reduces velocity by capturing a portion of the runoff and distributes it evenly along the length of the ponding area. Also provides aeration to the plant bed and enhances infiltration.
(3) Ponding Area	-	Collects and stores runoff prior to infiltration.
(4) Organic/Mulch Layer	-	Provides some filtering of runoff, encourages development of beneficial microorganisms, and protects the soil surface from erosion.
(5) Planting Soil	-	Provides nourishment for the plant life. Clay particles within the soil also remove certain pollutants through adsorption.
(6) Plants	-	Provides uptake of harmful pollutants.

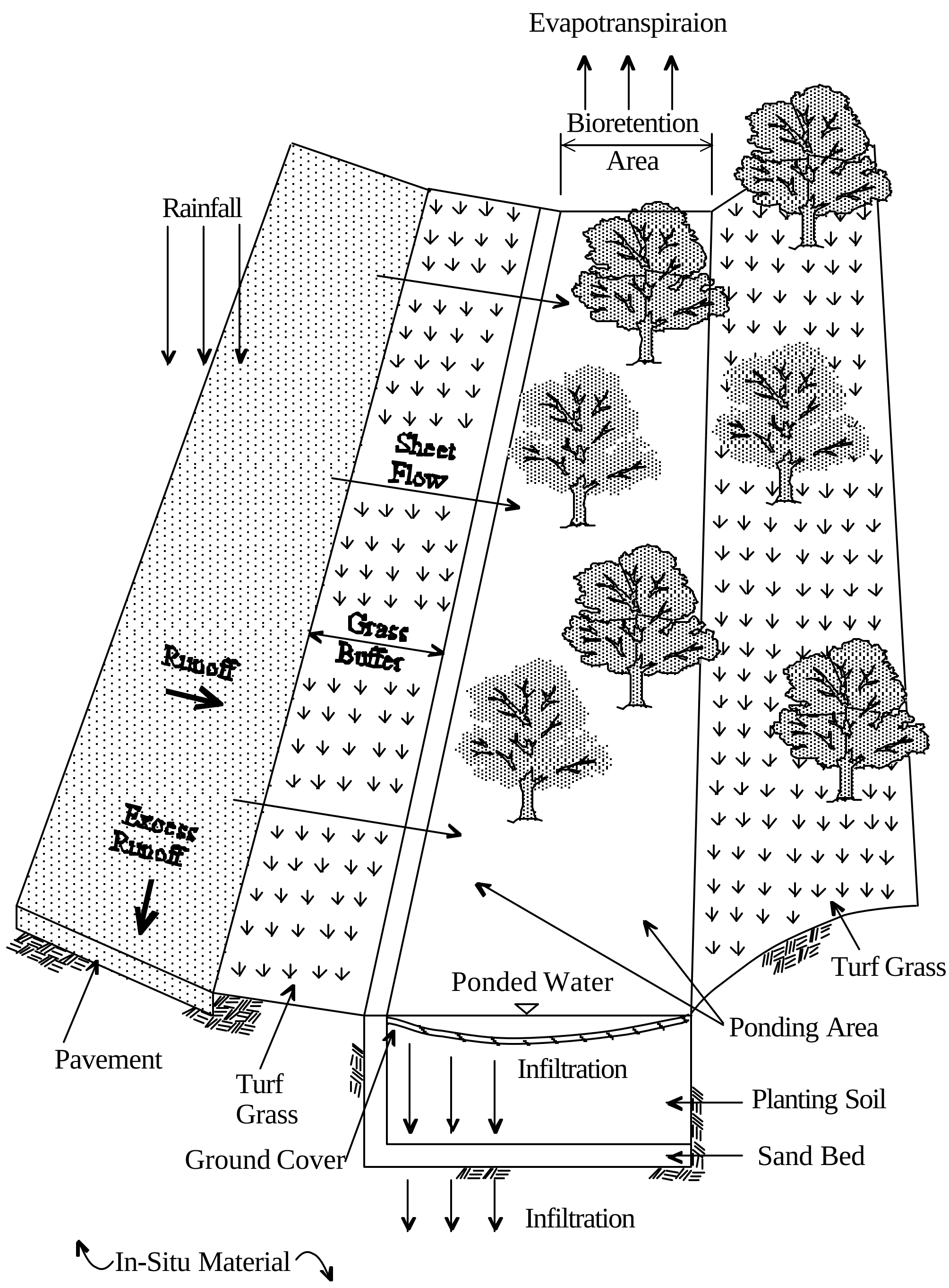

Figure 1. Schematic of a typical bioretention area BMP
(adapted from Prince George's County, 1993)

ADVANTAGES

1. If designed properly, has shown ability to remove significant amounts of dissolved heavy metals, phosphorous, TSS, and fine sediments.
2. Requires relatively little engineering design in comparison to other stormwater management facilities (e.g. sand filters).
3. Provides groundwater recharge when the runoff is allowed to infiltrate into the subsurface.
4. Enhances the appearance of parking lots and provides shade and wind breaks, absorbs noise, and improves an area's landscape.
5. Maintenance on a bioretention facility is limited to the removal of leaves from the bioretention area each fall.
6. The vegetation recommended for use in bioretention facilities is generally hardier than the species typically used in parking lot landscapes. This is a particular advantage in urban areas where plants often fare poorly due to poor soils and air pollution.

LIMITATIONS

1. Low removal of nitrates.
2. Not applicable on steep, unstable slopes or landslide areas (slopes greater than 20 percent).
3. Requires relatively large areas.
4. Not appropriate at locations where the water table is within 6 feet of the ground surface and where the surrounding soil stratum is unstable.
5. Clogging may be a problem, particularly if the BMP receives runoff with high sediment loads.

DESIGN CRITERIA

1. Calculate the volume of stormwater to be mitigated by the bioretention facility using the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works *Method for Calculating Standard Urban Stormwater Mitigation Plan (SUSMP) Flow Rates and Volumes Based on 0.75-inches of Rainfall*.
2. The soil should have infiltration rates greater than 0.5 inches per hour, otherwise an underdrain system should be included (see # 11).
3. Drainage to the bioretention facility must be graded to create sheet flow, not a concentrated stream. Level spreaders (i.e. slotted curbs) can be used to facilitate sheet flow. The maximum sheet flow velocity should be 1 ft/s for the planted ground cover and 3 ft/s for mulched cover.
4. Soil shall be a uniform mix, free of stones, stumps, roots or other similar objects larger than 1-inch in diameter. No other materials or substances shall be mixed or dumped

within the bioretention area that may be harmful to plant growth, or prove a hindrance to the planting or maintenance operations. The planting soil shall be free of Bermuda grass, Quackgrass, Johnson grass, Mugwort, Nutsedge, Poison Ivy, Canadian Thistle, Tearthumb, or other noxious weeds.

5. Planting soil shall be tested and meet the following criteria:

pH range	5.2-7.0
Organic matter	1.5-4.0%
Magnesium	35 lbs. per acre, minimum
Phosphorus P_2O_5	75 lbs. per acre, minimum
Potassium K_2O	85 lbs. per acre, minimum
Soluble salts	not to exceed 500 ppm
Clay	0-25% by volume
Silt	30-55% by volume
Sand	35-60% by volume

6. It is very important to minimize compaction of both the base of the bioretention area and the required backfill. When possible, use excavation hoes to remove original soil. If excavated using a loader, the excavator should use a wide track or marsh track equipment, or light equipment with turf type tires. Use of equipment with narrow tracks or narrow tires, rubber tires with large lugs, or high pressure tires will cause excessive compaction resulting in reduced infiltration rates and storage volumes and is not acceptable. Compaction will significantly contribute to design failure.
7. Compaction can be alleviated at the base of the bioretention facility by using a primary tilling operation such as a chisel plow, ripper, or subsoiler. These tilling operations are to refracture the soil profile through the 12 inch compaction zone. Substitute methods must be approved by the engineer. Rototillers typically do not till deep enough to reduce the effects of compaction from heavy equipment. Rototill 2 to 3 inches of sand into the base of the bioretention facility before back filing the required sand layer. Pump any ponded water before preparing (rototilling) base.
8. When back filling topsoil over the sand layer, first place 3 to 4 inches of topsoil over the sand, then rototill the sand/topsoil to create a gradation zone. Backfill the remainder of the topsoil to final grade.
9. Mulch around individual plants only. Shredded hardwood mulch is the only accepted mulch. Shredded hardwood mulch must be well aged (stockpiled or stored for at least 12 months) for acceptance. The mulch should be applied to a maximum depth of 3-inches.
10. The plant root ball should be planted so 1/8th of the ball is above final grade surface.
11. If used, place underdrains on a 3 feet wide section of filter cloth followed by a gravel bedding. Pipe is placed next, followed by the gravel bedding. The ends of underdrain pipes not terminating in an observation well shall be capped.
12. The main collector pipe for underdrain systems shall be constructed at a minimum slope of 0.5%. Observation wells and/or clean-out pipes must be provided (one

minimum per every 1,000 square feet of surface area).

13. Size an emergency overflow weir with 6-inches of head, using the Weir equation:

$$Q=CLH^{3/2}$$

Where C= 2.65 (smooth crested grass weir)
Q= flow rate
H = 6-inches of head
L = length of weir

14. Bioretention areas should be at least 15 feet wide with a 25 foot width preferable, and a minimum length of 40 feet long. Generally, the length-to-width ratio should be around 2 to 1 to improve surface flow characteristics.
15. The plant soil depth should be 4 feet or more to provide beneficial root zone, both in terms of space and moisture content.
16. The depth of the ponding area should be limited to no more than 6 inches to limit the duration of standing water to no more than 4 days. If an underdrain system is used, the depth of the ponding area should be limited to no more than 1 foot. Longer ponding times can lead to anaerobic conditions that are not conductive to plant growth. Longer periods of standing water can also lead to the breeding of mosquitoes and other pests.
17. The bioretention area should be vegetated to resemble a terrestrial forest community ecosystem, which is dominated by understory trees, a shrub layer, and herbaceous ground covers. Three species each of both trees and shrubs are recommended to be planted at a rate of 1000 trees and shrubs per acre. The shrub-to-tree ratio should be 2:1 to 3:1. Trees should be spread 12 feet apart and the shrubs should be spaced 8 feet apart.

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