

Description and Purpose

A silt fence is made of a filter fabric that has been entrenched, attached to supporting poles, and sometimes backed by a plastic or wire mesh for support. The silt fence detains sediment-laden water, promoting sedimentation behind the fence.

Suitable Applications

Silt fences are suitable for perimeter control, placed below areas where sheet flows discharge from the site. They should also be used as interior controls below disturbed areas where runoff may occur in the form of sheet and rill erosion. Silt fences are generally ineffective in locations where the flow is concentrated and are only applicable for sheet or overland flows. Silt fences are most effective when used in combination with erosion controls. Suitable applications include:

- Along the perimeter of a project.
- Below the toe or down slope of exposed and erodible slopes.
- Along streams and channels.
- Around temporary spoil areas and stockpiles.
- Below other small cleared areas.

Limitations

- Do not use in streams, channels, drain inlets, or anywhere flow is concentrated.

Objectives

EC	Erosion Control	
SE	Sediment Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
TR	Tracking Control	
WE	Wind Erosion Control	
NS	Non-Stormwater Management Control	
WM	Waste Management and Materials Pollution Control	

Legend:

- Primary Objective
- Secondary Objective

Targeted Constituents

Sediment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Nutrients	
Trash	
Metals	
Bacteria	
Oil and Grease	
Organics	

Potential Alternatives

- SE-5 Fiber Rolls
- SE-6 Gravel Bag Berm
- SE-8 Sandbag Barrier
- SE-9 Straw Bale Barrier



- Do not use in locations where ponded water may cause flooding.
- Do not place fence on a slope, or across any contour line. If not installed at the same elevation throughout, silt fences will create erosion.
- Filter fences will create a temporary sedimentation pond on the upstream side of the fence and may cause temporary flooding. Fences not constructed on a level contour will be overtopped by concentrated flow resulting in failure of the filter fence.
- Improperly installed fences are subject to failure from undercutting, overlapping, or collapsing.
 - Not effective unless trenched and keyed in.
 - Not intended for use as mid-slope protection on slopes greater than 4:1 (H:V).
 - Do not allow water depth to exceed 1.5 ft at any point.

Implementation

General

A silt fence is a temporary sediment barrier consisting of filter fabric stretched across and attached to supporting posts, entrenched, and, depending upon the strength of fabric used, supported with plastic or wire mesh fence. Silt fences trap sediment by intercepting and detaining small amounts of sediment-laden runoff from disturbed areas in order to promote sedimentation behind the fence.

Silt fences are preferable to straw bale barriers in many cases. Laboratory work at the Virginia Highway and Transportation Research Council has shown that silt fences can trap a much higher percentage of suspended sediments than can straw bales. While the failure rate of silt fences is lower than that of straw bale barriers, there are many instances where silt fences have been improperly installed. The following layout and installation guidance can improve performance and should be followed:

- Use principally in areas where sheet flow occurs.
- Don't use in streams, channels, or anywhere flow is concentrated. Don't use silt fences to divert flow.
- Don't use below slopes subject to creep, slumping, or landslides.
- Select filter fabric that retains 85% of soil by weight, based on sieve analysis, but that is not finer than an equivalent opening size of 70.
- Install along a level contour, so water does not pond more than 1.5 ft at any point along the silt fence.
- The maximum length of slope draining to any point along the silt fence should be 200 ft or less.
- The maximum slope perpendicular to the fence line should be 1:1.

- Provide sufficient room for runoff to pond behind the fence and to allow sediment removal equipment to pass between the silt fence and toes of slopes or other obstructions. About 1200 ft² of ponding area should be provided for every acre draining to the fence.
- Turn the ends of the filter fence uphill to prevent stormwater from flowing around the fence.
- Leave an undisturbed or stabilized area immediately down slope from the fence where feasible.
- Silt fences should remain in place until the disturbed area is permanently stabilized.

Design and Layout

Selection of a filter fabric is based on soil conditions at the construction site (which affect the equivalent opening size (EOS) fabric specification) and characteristics of the support fence (which affect the choice of tensile strength). The designer should specify a filter fabric that retains the soil found on the construction site yet that it has openings large enough to permit drainage and prevent clogging. The following criteria is recommended for selection of the equivalent opening size:

1. If 50 percent or less of the soil, by weight, will pass the U.S. Standard Sieve No. 200, select the EOS to retain 85 % of the soil. The EOS should not be finer than EOS 70.
2. For all other soil types, the EOS should be no larger than the openings in the U.S. Standard Sieve No. 70 except where direct discharge to a stream, lake, or wetland will occur, then the EOS should be no larger than Standard Sieve No. 100.

To reduce the chance of clogging, it is preferable to specify a fabric with openings as large as allowed by the criteria. No fabric should be specified with an EOS smaller than U.S. Standard Sieve No. 100. If 85% or more of a soil, by weight, passes through the openings in a No. 200 sieve, filter fabric should not be used. Most of the particles in such a soil would not be retained if the EOS was too large and they would clog the fabric quickly if the EOS were small enough to capture the soil.

The fence should be supported by a plastic or wire mesh if the fabric selected does not have sufficient strength and bursting strength characteristics for the planned application (as recommended by the fabric manufacturer). Filter fabric material should contain ultraviolet inhibitors and stabilizers to provide a minimum of six months of expected usable construction life at a temperature range of 0 °F to 120 °F.

- Layout in accordance with attached figures.
- For slopes steeper than 2:1 (H:V) and that contain a high number of rocks or large dirt clods that tend to dislodge, it may be necessary to install additional protection immediately adjacent to the bottom of the slope, prior to installing silt fence. Additional protection may be a chain link fence or a cable fence.
- For slopes adjacent to sensitive receiving waters or Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), silt fence should be used in conjunction with erosion control BMPs.

Materials

- Silt fence fabric should be woven polypropylene with a minimum width of 36 in. and a minimum tensile strength of 100 lb force. The fabric should conform to the requirements in ASTM designation D4632 and should have an integral reinforcement layer. The reinforcement layer should be a polypropylene, or equivalent, net provided by the manufacturer. The permittivity of the fabric should be between 0.1 sec^{-1} and 0.15 sec^{-1} in conformance with the requirements in ASTM designation D4491.
- Wood stakes should be commercial quality lumber of the size and shape shown on the plans. Each stake should be free from decay, splits or cracks longer than the thickness of the stake or other defects that would weaken the stakes and cause the stakes to be structurally unsuitable.
- Staples used to fasten the fence fabric to the stakes should be not less than 1.75 in. long and should be fabricated from 15 gauge or heavier wire. The wire used to fasten the tops of the stakes together when joining two sections of fence should be 9 gauge or heavier wire. Galvanizing of the fastening wire will not be required.
- There are new products that may use prefabricated plastic holders for the silt fence and use bar reinforcement instead of wood stakes. If bar reinforcement is used in lieu of wood stakes, use number four or greater bar. Provide end protection for any exposed bar reinforcement.

Installation Guidelines

Silt fences are to be constructed on a level contour. Sufficient area should exist behind the fence for ponding to occur without flooding or overtopping the fence.

- A trench should be excavated approximately 6 in. wide and 6 in. deep along the line the proposed silt fence.
- Bottom of the silt fence should be keyed-in a minimum of 12 in.
- Posts should be spaced a maximum of 6 ft apart and driven securely into the ground a minimum of 18 in. or 12 in. below the bottom of the trench.
- When standard strength filter fabric is used, a plastic or wire mesh support fence should be fastened securely to the upslope side of posts using heavy-duty wire staples at least 1 in. long. The mesh should extend into the trench. When extra-strength filter fabric and closer post spacing are used, the mesh support fence may be eliminated. Filter fabric should be purchased in a long roll, and then cut to the length of the barrier. When joints are necessary, filter cloth should be spliced together only at a support post, with a minimum 6 in. overlap and both ends securely fastened to the post.
- The trench should be backfilled with compacted native material.
- Construct silt fences with a setback of at least 3 ft from the toe of a slope. Where a silt fence is determined to be not practicable due to specific site conditions, the silt fence may be constructed at the toe of the slope, but should be constructed as far from the toe of the slope as practicable. Silt fences close to the toe of the slope will be less effective and difficult to maintain.

- Construct the length of each reach so that the change in base elevation along the reach does not exceed 1/3 the height of the barrier; in no case should the reach exceed 500 ft.

Costs

- Average annual cost for installation and maintenance (assumes 6 month useful life): \$7 per lineal foot (\$850 per drainage acre). Range of cost is \$3.50 - \$9.10 per lineal foot.

Inspection and Maintenance

- Inspect BMPs prior to forecast rain, daily during extended rain events, after rain events, weekly during the rainy season, and at two-week intervals during the non-rainy season.
- Repair undercut silt fences.
- Repair or replace split, torn, slumping, or weathered fabric. The lifespan of silt fence fabric is generally 5 to 8 months.
- Silt fences that are damaged and become unsuitable for the intended purpose should be removed from the site of work, disposed of, and replaced with new silt fence barriers.
- Sediment that accumulates in the BMP must be periodically removed in order to maintain BMP effectiveness. Sediment should be removed when the sediment accumulation reaches one-third of the barrier height. Sediment removed during maintenance may be incorporated into earthwork on the site or disposed at an appropriate location.
- Silt fences should be left in place until the upstream area is permanently stabilized. Until then, the silt fence must be inspected and maintained.
- Holes, depressions, or other ground disturbance caused by the removal of the silt fences should be backfilled and repaired.

References

Manual of Standards of Erosion and Sediment Control Measures, Association of Bay Area Governments, May 1995.

National Management Measures to Control Nonpoint Source Pollution from Urban Areas, United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2002.

Proposed Guidance Specifying Management Measures for Sources of Nonpoint Pollution in Coastal Waters, Work Group-Working Paper, USEPA, April 1992.

Sedimentation and Erosion Control Practices, and Inventory of Current Practices (Draft), UESPA, 1990.

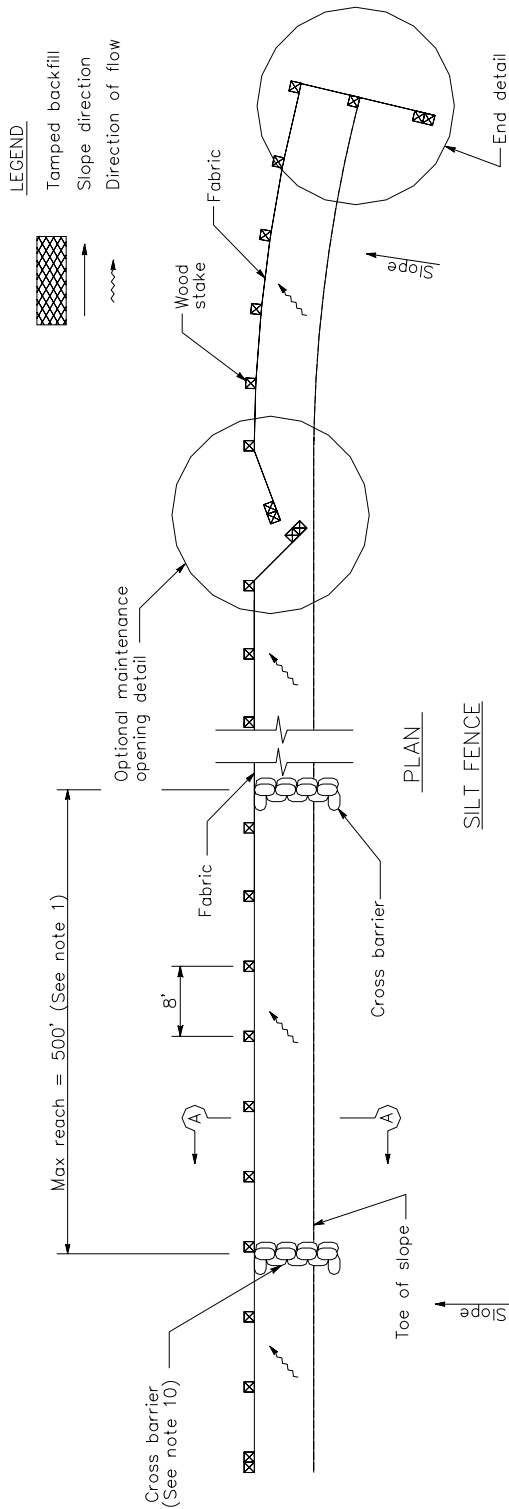
Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC). Costs of Urban Nonpoint Source Water Pollution Control Measures. Technical Report No. 31. Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, Waukesha, WI. 1991

Stormwater Quality Handbooks - Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs) Manual, State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), November 2000.

Stormwater Management Manual for The Puget Sound Basin, Washington State Department of Ecology, Public Review Draft, 1991.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). Stormwater Management for Industrial Activities: Developing Pollution Prevention Plans and Best Management Practices. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water, Washington, DC, 1992.

Water Quality Management Plan for the Lake Tahoe Region, Volume II, Handbook of Management Practices, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, November 1988.



NOTES

1. Construct the length of each reach so that the change in base elevation along the reach does not exceed 1/3 the height of the linear barrier, in no case shall the reach length exceed 500'.
2. The last 8'-0" of fence shall be turned up slope.
3. Stake dimensions are nominal.
4. Dimension may vary to fit field condition.
5. Stakes shall be spaced at 8'-0" maximum and shall be positioned on downstream side of fence.
6. Stakes to overlap and fence fabric to fold around each stake one full turn. Secure fabric to stake with 4 staples.
7. Stakes shall be driven tightly together to prevent potential flow-through of sediment at joint. The tops of the stakes shall be secured with wire.
8. For end stake, fence fabric shall be folded around two stakes one full turn and secured with 4 staples.
9. Minimum 4 staples per stake. Dimensions shown are typical.
10. Cross barriers shall be a minimum of 1/3 and a maximum of 1/2 the height of the linear barrier.
11. Maintenance openings shall be constructed in a manner to ensure sediment remains behind silt fence.
12. Joining sections shall not be placed at sump locations.
13. Sandbag rows and layers shall be offset to eliminate gaps.

