

## Description and Purpose

A sandbag barrier is a series of sand-filled bags placed on a level contour to intercept or to divert sheet flows. Sandbag barriers placed on a level contour pond sheet flow runoff, allowing sediment to settle out.

## Suitable Applications

Sandbag barriers may be suitable:

- As a linear sediment control measure:
  - Below the toe of slopes and erodible slopes.
  - As sediment traps at culvert/pipe outlets.
  - Below other small cleared areas.
  - Along the perimeter of a site.
  - Down slope of exposed soil areas.
  - Around temporary stockpiles and spoil areas.
  - Parallel to a roadway to keep sediment off paved areas.
  - Along streams and channels.
- As linear erosion control measure:
  - Along the face and at grade breaks of exposed and erodible slopes to shorten slope length and spread runoff as sheet flow.

## Categories

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

## Legend:

- Primary Category**
- Secondary Category**

## Targeted Constituents

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

## Potential Alternatives

- SE-1 Silt Fence
- SE-5 Fiber Rolls
- SE-6 Gravel Bag Berm
- SE-14 Biofilter Bags



- At the top of slopes to divert runoff away from disturbed slopes.
- As check dams across mildly sloped construction roads.

## Limitations

- It is necessary to limit the drainage area upstream of the barrier to 5 acres.
- Sandbags are not intended to be used as filtration devices.
- Easily damaged by construction equipment.
- Degraded sandbags may rupture when removed, spilling sand.
- Sand is easily transported by runoff if bag is damaged or ruptured.
- Installation can be labor intensive.
- Durability of sandbags is somewhat limited and bags may need to be replaced when installation is required for longer than 6 months. When used to detain concentrated flows, maintenance requirements increase.
- Burlap should not be used for sandbags.

## Implementation

### *General*

A sandbag barrier consists of a row of sand-filled bags placed on a level contour. When appropriately placed, a sandbag barrier intercepts and slows sheet flow runoff, causing temporary ponding. The temporary ponding allows sediment to settle. Sand-filled bags have limited porosity, which is further limited as the fine sand tends to quickly plug with sediment, limiting or completely blocking the rate of flow through the barrier. If a porous barrier is desired, consider SE-1, Silt Fence, SE-5, Fiber Rolls, SE-6, Gravel Bag Berms or SE-14, Biofilter Bags. Sandbag barriers also interrupt the slope length and thereby reduce erosion by reducing the tendency of sheet flows to concentrate into rivulets which erode rills, and ultimately gullies, into disturbed, sloped soils. Sandbag barriers are similar to gravel bag berms, but less porous. Generally, sandbag barriers should be used in conjunction with temporary soil stabilization controls up slope to provide effective erosion and sediment control.

### *Design and Layout*

- Locate sandbag barriers on a level contour.
  - When used for slope interruption, the following slope/sheet flow length combinations apply:
    - Slope inclination of 4:1 (H:V) or flatter: Sandbags should be placed at a maximum interval of 20 ft, with the first row near the slope toe.
    - Slope inclination between 4:1 and 2:1 (H:V): Sandbags should be placed at a maximum interval of 15 ft. (a closer spacing is more effective), with the first row near the slope toe.
- Slope inclination 2:1 (H:V) or greater: Sandbags should be placed at a maximum interval of 10 ft. (a closer spacing is more effective), with the first row near the slope toe.

- Turn the ends of the sandbag barrier up slope to prevent runoff from going around the barrier.
- Allow sufficient space up slope from the barrier to allow ponding, and to provide room for sediment storage.
- For installation near the toe of the slope, sand bag barriers should be set back from the slope toe to facilitate cleaning. Where specific site conditions do not allow for a set-back, the sand bag barrier may be constructed on the toe of the slope. To prevent flows behind the barrier, bags can be placed perpendicular to a berm to serve as cross barriers.
- Drainage area should not exceed 5 acres.
- Stack sandbags at least three bags high.
- Butt ends of bags tightly.
- Overlap butt joints of row beneath with each successive row.
- Use a pyramid approach when stacking bags.
- In non-traffic areas
  - Height = 18 in. maximum
  - Top width = 24 in. minimum for three or more layer construction
  - Side slope = 2:1 (H:V) or flatter
- In construction traffic areas
  - Height = 12 in. maximum
  - Top width = 24 in. minimum for three or more layer construction.
  - Side slopes = 2:1 (H:V) or flatter.
- See typical sandbag barrier installation details at the end of this fact sheet.

## **Materials**

- **Sandbag Material:** Sandbag should be woven polypropylene, polyethylene or polyamide fabric, minimum unit weight of 4 ounces/yd<sup>2</sup>, Mullen burst strength exceeding 300 lb/in<sup>2</sup> in conformance with the requirements in ASTM designation D3786, and ultraviolet stability exceeding 70% in conformance with the requirements in ASTM designation D4355. Use of burlap is not an acceptable substitute, as sand can more easily mobilize out of burlap.
- **Sandbag Size:** Each sand-filled bag should have a length of 18 in., width of 12 in., thickness of 3 in., and mass of approximately 33 lbs. Bag dimensions are nominal, and may vary based on locally available materials.

- **Fill Material:** All sandbag fill material should be non-cohesive, Class 3 (Caltrans Standard Specification, Section 25) permeable material free from clay and deleterious material, such as recycled concrete or asphalt..

## Costs

Empty sandbags cost \$0.25 - \$0.75. Average cost of fill material is \$8 per yd<sup>3</sup>. Additional labor is required to fill the bags. Pre-filled sandbags are more expensive at \$1.50 - \$2.00 per bag. These costs are based upon vendor research.

## Inspection and Maintenance

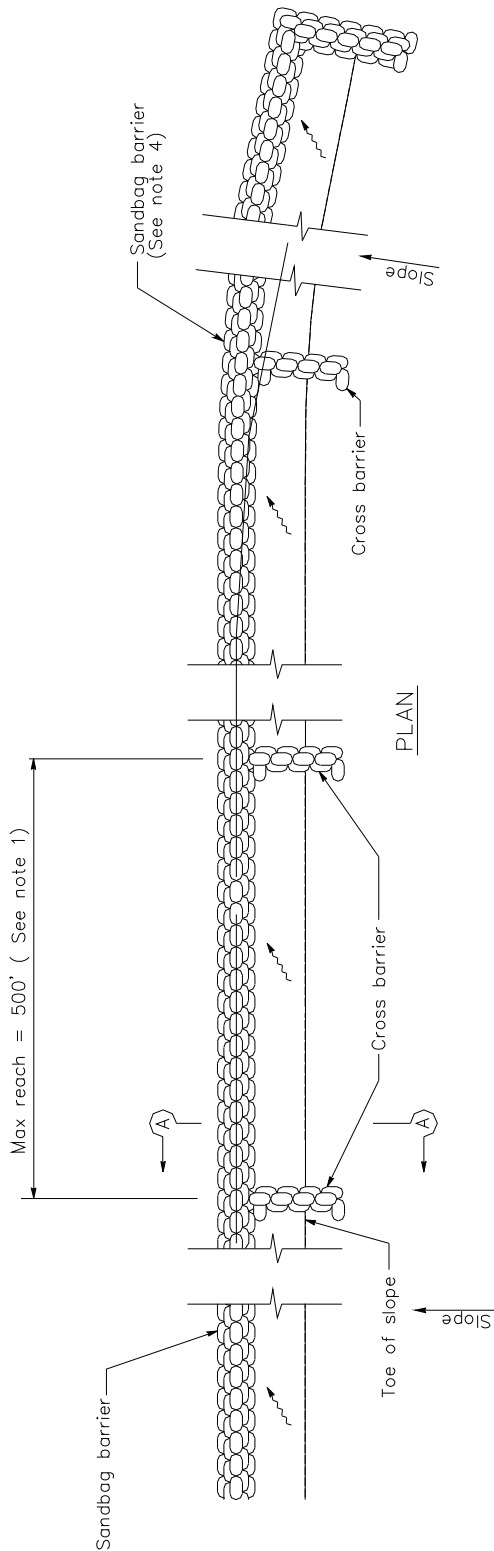
- BMPs must be inspected in accordance with General Permit requirements for the associated project type and risk level. It is recommended that at a minimum, BMPs be inspected weekly, prior to forecasted rain events, daily during extended rain events, and after the conclusion of rain events.
- Sandbags exposed to sunlight will need to be replaced every two to three months due to degradation of the bags.
- Reshape or replace sandbags as needed.
- Repair washouts or other damage as needed.
- Sediment that accumulates behind the BMP should be periodically removed in order to maintain BMP effectiveness. Sediment should be removed when the sediment accumulation reaches one-third of the barrier height.
- Remove sandbags when no longer needed and recycle sand fill whenever possible and properly dispose of bag material. Remove sediment accumulation, and clean, re-grade, and stabilize the area.

## References

Standard Specifications for Construction of Local Streets and Roads, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), July 2002.

Stormwater Quality Handbooks - Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs) Manual, State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), March 2003.

Erosion and Sediment Control Manual, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, February 2005.



## SANDBAG BARRIER

### NOTES

1. Construct the length of each reach so that the change in base elevation along the reach does not exceed  $1/2$  the height of the linear barrier. In no case shall the reach length exceed 500'.
2. Place sandbags tightly.
3. Dimension may vary to fit field condition.
4. Sandbag barrier shall be a minimum of 3 bags high.
5. The end of the barrier shall be turned up slope.
6. Cross barriers shall be a min of  $1/2$  and a max of  $2/3$  the height of the linear barrier.
7. Sandbag rows and layers shall be staggered to eliminate gaps.

