ENVIRONMENTAL BULLETIN

A routine publication providing environmental-related guidance to NDOT District Staff and Contractors

NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Spring 2025

IN THIS ISSUE

Slash Mulch – A Best Management Practice

Slash mulch, or mulch perimeter control, can be utilized on NDOT projects as a temporary best management practice (BMP) to help dissipate energy and filter stormwater runoff. Slash mulch is typically only available on projects with a large amount of clearing and grubbing where all tree and shrub debris is then ground. Slash mulch specifications can be found in Section 813 of the spec book.

Figure 1: Slash mulch berms work well as perimeter control as a secondary BMP to existing grass buffer or cover crop.

General Guidelines

- Slash mulch berms shall be constructed prior to grading activities occurring in locations noted in the contract or as directed by the engineer. Communicate with contractors to see where future grading activities are scheduled to ensure slash mulch placement.
- Slash mulch berms need regular inspection after rain events to ensure they are still functional and do not need cleaned out.
- Slash mulch can be used in conjunction with other BMPs, such as silt fence, silt checks, or earth checks to ensure sediment does not leave the site.

- Upon completion of the project, all slash mulch berms can be left in place or spread out around the area of their original placement.
- Slash mulch is paid by the Cubic Yard (CY) at initial installation. Maintenance of slash mulch is to be paid by equipment rental (Hour).

Inspecting Slash Mulch

Below are key criteria to look for when inspecting slash mulch…

- The most common application for slash mulch is a ditch check application. Slash mulch berms should have a central depression to ensure flow does not bypass the berm.
- Slash mulch berms must be cleaned when at 50% capacity by removal and disposal of the silt to maintain functionality. Sediment removed from a slash mulch berm should be deposited in an upland location.

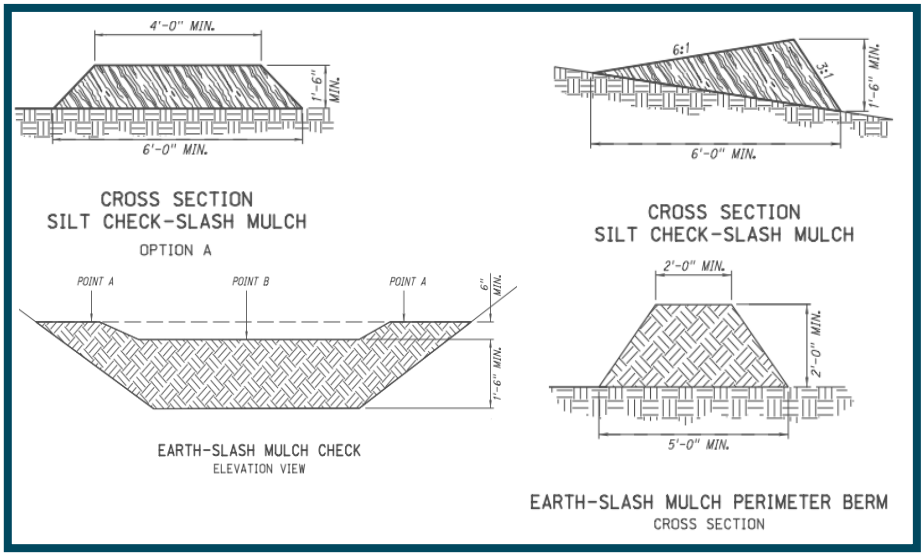


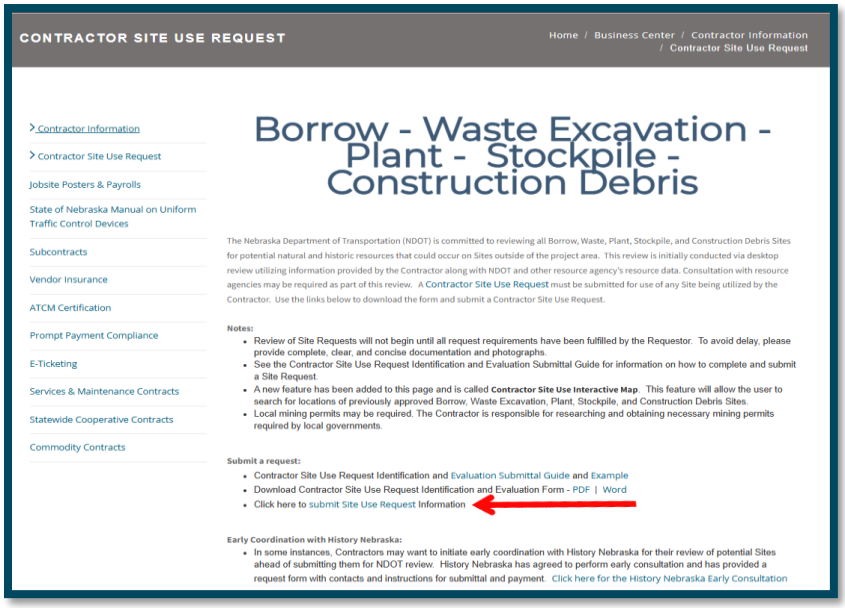
Figure 2: Slash mulch has several different applications and specifications. Refer to the Special Plans (U-Sheets) for the appropriate scenario and build notes.

Contractor Site Requests - Reminder

Please remind contractors to submit all Contractor Site Requests to the Material Source Site request email at ndot.mssrequest@nebraska.gov.

This allows multiple people to see the requests as they come in which can expedite processing. The screenshot to the right shows the webpage where detailed instructions for request submittals are located as well as the link to the official email address. Webpage is at the following link: Contractor Site Use Request - NDOT

If there are any questions, contact Tony Ringenberg (402-479-4410).

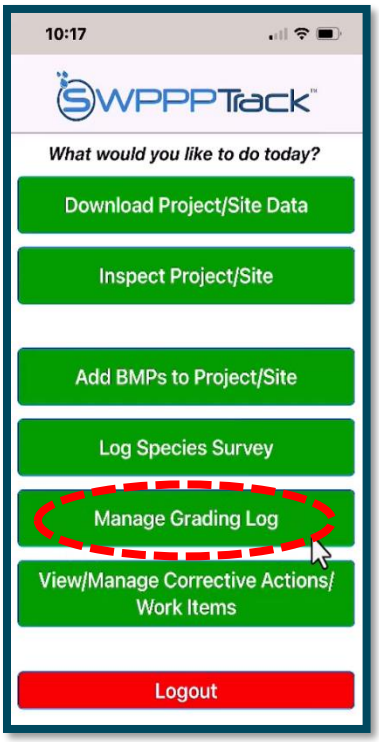


SWPPPTrack App Update – Grading Log

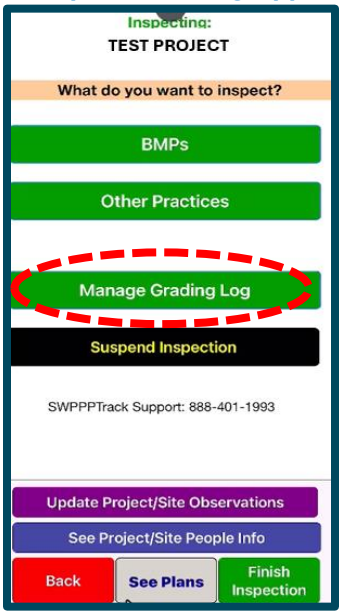
SWPPPTrack "Grading Log" can now be accessed using the SWPPPTrack DOT App

The most recent SWPPPTrack DOT App update (March 2025) included new functionality that allows project inspectors to document grading events within the SWPPPTrack DOT App. Previously the only option was to complete the log within the SWPPPTrack Website. Now there are multiple options for completing the Grading Log. They are all described below:

Option 1 – Without Inspection Using App



Option 2 – During Inspection Using App

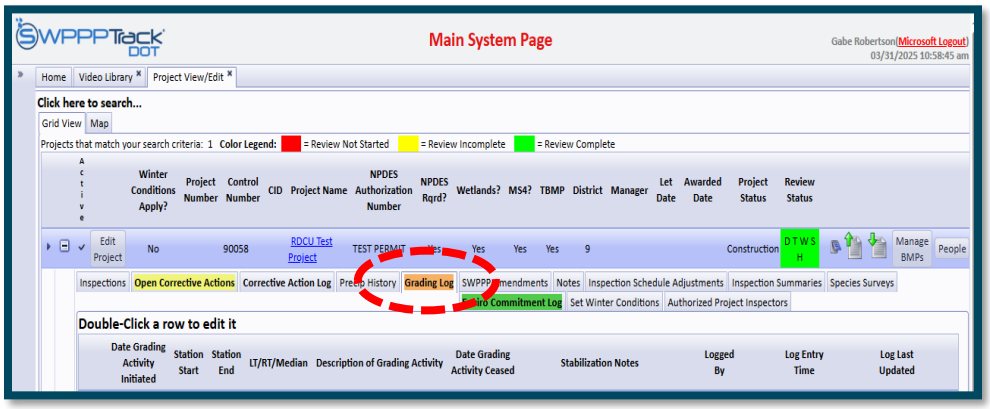


Option 1: You can document grading events while using the app without doing a SWPPP inspection. Simply download the project data for the applicable project and then select "Manage Grading Log" from the app home screen as shown in the screenshot. This will allow to update the events and then upload the data when you are completed. Again, this can be done at any time without logging an official inspection.

Option 2: You can also document grading events within the app while performing your SWPPP inspection. You will now see the "Manage Grading Log" button available on the inspection page as shown in the corresponding screenshot. Events can be updated during your inspection and then uploaded with the inspection report.

Option 3 – SWPPPTrack Website

Option 3: Finally, you can still manage the grading log at any time using the SWPPPTrack website as shown in the corresponding screenshot.



Whichever option you use it's important to document these events on a regular basis and to stabilize these areas with erosion and sediment controls within 14 days of work temporarily or permanently ceasing.

Threatened & Endangered Species Updates

The Technical Resource Unit (TRU) recently discussed different T&E topics during District Environmental Roundtables: American Burying Beetle (ABB), bats, and pollinators. These species and regulatory changes have impacted project delivery and construction, causing delays during project letting and revisions.

The ABB experienced a regulatory change in 2020 that made the usual NDOT processes for handling the species nonviable. As a result, NDOT, in collaboration with FHWA, USFWS, and NGPC, has developed a programmatic biological assessment (PBA) and biological opinion (PBO). The PBA was signed by Federal Highway Administration in early April 2025. The US Fish and Wildlife Service with Nebraska Game and Parks are now reviewing the programmatic, with the programmatic slated to be functional by Fall 2025. Several changes will be implemented as part of the ABB programmatic, including the addition of seven new Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation (AMM) measures. All grading beyond the toe of slope within suitable habitat will now require mitigation, as will impacts caused by borrow sites or other actions such as utilities.

Additionally, bats now have new guidelines. From April 1st to November 15th, trees must be surveyed before clearing with no more than 10 trees permitted for removal during this time. If more than 0.5 acres of suitable bat habitat is to be cleared, an acoustic survey is required, which can take weeks to complete and must be done between May 15th and August 15th.

While pollinators like the Monarch Butterfly are not yet federally listed, NDOT is proactively applying for participation in the Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCAA), as the Monarch is anticipated to be listed by late 2025 or early 2026. If NDOT does not join the CCAA, projects will likely be processed like American Burying Beetle is, but statewide.

If there are any questions, contact Ben Trenne (402-479-4411).

Erosion Control Blanket Specification Update

As NDOT begins to move towards plastic-free erosion control products, a new special provision will be implemented on projects that are let in the July 2025 letting that use Class 1 (Class 1C, 1D, 1E, 1F) Erosion Control Blankets (ECBs). The special provision introduces a new philosophy towards ECBs which puts more emphasis on using the product to be environmentally friendly. Plastic netting in ECBs has long been a problem for several factors including: life-threatening risks to wildlife, such as snakes, and potential pollutants like microplastics left behind as the plastic breaks down.

Plastic netting in ECBs does not serve any function for slope stability and was only developed as an economical means to hold blankets together. Without plastic in ECBs, blanket netting can be a leno weave comprised of jute,

cotton, or hemp. Open weave textiles are another option, and already commonly used on projects in the Sandhills region.

Next Steps…

- Update Approved Products List (APL) requirements
  - Plastic net products will remain on APL for carry over projects
- Review installation details
- Public Outreach
  - Contractors
  - Suppliers
  - Manufacturers
- Begin reviewing options for plastic-free Class 2 (Class 2A, 2B, 2C) ECBs and silt checks

District Showcase

Slash mulch can be utilized instead of sediment controls during permanent seeding. This can save money and utilize readily available resources.

Several permanent BMPs installed at a large bridge location including: Erosion Control 1D & 1F, Transition Mat, Rock Checks, and Silt Checks.

Temporary erosion control blankets with slash mulch as a secondary BMP used to stabilize and protect creek channel until bridge work could be finished.

Tenting with erosion control blankets is common when blankets do not have the required number of staples. Ensure blankets have enough staples so there is good soil to blanket contact so vegetation can adequately grow through the blanket.

NDOT Erosion and Sediment Control Training Course Guidance

NDOT Erosion and Sediment Control INSPECTOR CERTIFICATION

The NDOT Erosion and Sediment Control Inspector Certification is currently being offered in an online format only. To obtain your new inspector certification please complete both the "Inspector Re-Certification" and "Installer Certification" courses described below.

Participants who successfully complete these courses are awarded a five-year inspector certification and can conduct construction stormwater site inspections on NDOT projects.

NDOT Erosion and Sediment Control INSPECTOR RE-CERTIFICATION Course

Inspector re-certification can be obtained online by accessing the UNL-LTAP training website. This online course provides previously certified and new inspectors (new inspectors must also complete the installer course) a convenient way to re-certify for five years. The course is designed for NDOT construction site operations, supervisors, and managers who will be conducting or assisting with construction stormwater site inspections. Learning objectives include: stormwater permit requirements; erosion and BMPs; good housekeeping and pollution prevention BMPs; inspection and maintenance procedures; and SWPPP management.

Course Link: https://www.ltap.unl.edu/assnfe/searchcourses.asp?csKeyword=erosion

NDOT Erosion and Sediment Control INSTALLER CERTIFICATION Course

This online course is designed for NDOT construction site operators, supervisors, and technicians who will be installing or maintaining erosion and sediment control best management practices (BMPs) on NDOT construction sites.

Learning objectives include: an overview of NDOT's construction stormwater program, NDOT erosion control plan reading, the process of accelerated soil erosion, the distinction between erosion control and sediment control, installation and maintenance requirements for erosion and sediment control BMPs and good housekeeping BMPs.

Participants who successfully complete this course are awarded a five-year installer certification and can install and/or maintain erosion and sediment control BMPs on NDOT projects.

Course Link: https://www.ltap.unl.edu/assnfe/searchcourses.asp?csKeyword=erosion

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Aaron Bedea – Hazardous Materials/Unexpected Waste (Districts 2,3,5,6)
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Reach out to us for environmental compliance assistance.