



Description and Purpose

Clear water diversion consists of a system of structures and measures that intercept clear surface water runoff upstream of a project, transport it around the work area, and discharge it downstream with minimal water quality degradation from either the project construction operations or the construction of the diversion. Clear water diversions are used in a waterway to enclose a construction area and reduce sediment pollution from construction work occurring in or adjacent to water. Structures commonly used as part of this system include diversion ditches, berms, dikes, slope drains, rock, gravel bags, wood, aqua barriers, cofferdams, filter fabric or turbidity curtains, drainage and interceptor swales, pipes, or flumes.

Suitable Applications

A clear water diversion is typically implemented where appropriate permits (1601 Agreement) have been secured and work must be performed in a flowing stream or water body.

- Clear water diversions are appropriate for isolating construction activities occurring within or near a water body such as streambank stabilization, or culvert, bridge, pier or abutment installation. They may also be used in combination with other methods, such as clear water bypasses and/or pumps.
- Pumped diversions are suitable for intermittent and low flow streams.
- Excavation of a temporary bypass channel, or passing the flow through a heavy pipe (called a “flume”) with a trench

Categories

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

None

If User/Subscriber modifies this fact sheet in any way, the CASQA name/logo and footer below must be removed from each page and not appear on the modified version.



excavated under it, is appropriate for the diversion of streams less than 20 ft wide, with flow rates less than 100 cfs.

- Clear water diversions incorporating clean washed gravel may be appropriate for use in salmonid spawning streams.

Limitations

- Diversion and encroachment activities will usually disturb the waterway during installation and removal of diversion structures.
- Installation may require Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) 401 Certification, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit and approval by California Department of Fish and Game. If numerical-based water quality standards are mentioned in any of these and other related permits, testing and sampling may be required.
- Diversion and encroachment activities may constrict the waterway, which can obstruct flood flows and cause flooding or washouts. Diversion structures should not be installed without identifying potential impacts to the stream channel.
- Diversion or isolation activities are not appropriate in channels where there is insufficient stream flow to support aquatic species in the area dewatered as a result of the diversion.
- Diversion or isolation activities are inappropriate in deep water unless designed or reviewed by an engineer registered in California.
- Diversion or isolation activities should not completely dam stream flow.
- Dewatering and removal may require additional sediment control or water treatment. See NS-2, Dewatering Operations.
- Not appropriate if installation, maintenance, and removal of the structures will disturb sensitive aquatic species of concern.

Implementation

General

- Implement guidelines presented in EC-12, Streambank Stabilization to minimize impacts to streambanks.
- Where working areas encroach on flowing streams, barriers adequate to prevent the flow of muddy water into streams should be constructed and maintained between working areas and streams. During construction of the barriers, muddying of streams should be held to a minimum.
- Diversion structures must be adequately designed to accommodate fluctuations in water depth or flow volume due to tides, storms, flash floods, etc.
- Heavy equipment driven in wet portions of a water body to accomplish work should be completely clean of petroleum residue, and water levels should be below the fuel tanks, gearboxes, and axles of the equipment unless lubricants and fuels are sealed such that inundation by water will not result in discharges of fuels, oils, greases, or hydraulic fluids.

- Excavation equipment buckets may reach out into the water for the purpose of removing or placing fill materials. Only the bucket of the crane/ excavator/backhoe may operate in a water body. The main body of the crane/excavator/backhoe should not enter the water body except as necessary to cross the stream to access the work site.
- Stationary equipment such as motors and pumps located within or adjacent to a water body, should be positioned over drip pans.
- When any artificial obstruction is being constructed, maintained, or placed in operation, sufficient water should, at all times, be allowed to pass downstream to maintain aquatic life.
- Equipment should not be parked below the high water mark unless allowed by a permit.
- Disturbance or removal of vegetation should not exceed the minimum necessary to complete operations. Precautions should be taken to avoid damage to vegetation by people or equipment. Disturbed vegetation should be replaced with the appropriate erosion control measures.
- Riparian vegetation approved for trimming as part of the project should be cut off no lower than ground level to promote rapid re-growth. Access roads and work areas built over riparian vegetation should be covered by a sufficient layer of clean river run cobble to prevent damage to the underlying soil and root structure. The cobble should be removed upon completion of project activities.
- Drip pans should be placed under all vehicles and equipment placed on docks, barges, or other structures over water bodies when the vehicle or equipment is planned to be idle for more than 1 hour.
- Where possible, avoid or minimize diversion and encroachment impacts by scheduling construction during periods of low flow or when the stream is dry. Scheduling should also consider seasonal releases of water from dams, fish migration and spawning seasons, and water demands due to crop irrigation.
- Construct diversion structures with materials free of potential pollutants such as soil, silt, sand, clay, grease, or oil.

Temporary Diversions and Encroachments

- Construct diversion channels in accordance with EC-9, Earth Dikes and Drainage Swales.
- In high flow velocity areas, stabilize slopes of embankments and diversion ditches using an appropriate liner, in accordance with EC-7, Geotextiles and Mats, or use rock slope protection.
- Where appropriate, use natural streambed materials such as large cobbles and boulders for temporary embankment and slope protection, or other temporary soil stabilization methods.
- Provide for velocity dissipation at transitions in the diversion, such as the point where the stream is diverted to the channel and the point where the diverted stream is returned to its natural channel. See also EC-10, Velocity Dissipation Devices.

Temporary Dry Construction Areas

- When dewatering behind temporary structures to create a temporary dry construction area, such as cofferdams, pass pumped water through a sediment-settling device, such as a portable tank or settling basin, before returning water to the water body. See also NS-2, Dewatering Operations.
- Any substance used to assemble or maintain diversion structures, such as form oil, should be non-toxic and non-hazardous.
- Any material used to minimize seepage underneath diversion structures, such as grout, should be non-toxic, non-hazardous, and as close to a neutral pH as possible.

Comparison of Diversion and Isolation Techniques:

- Gravel bags are relatively inexpensive, but installation and removal can be labor intensive. It is also difficult to dewater the isolated area. Sandbags should not be used for this technique in rivers or streams, as sand should never be put into or adjacent to a stream, even if encapsulated in geotextile.
- Gravel Bag Berms (SE-6) used in conjunction with an impermeable membrane are cost effective, and can be dewatered relatively easily. If spawning gravel is used, the impermeable membrane can be removed from the stream, and the gravel can be spread out and left as salmonid spawning habitat if approved in the permit. Only clean, washed gravel should be used for both the gravel bag and gravel berm techniques.
- Cofferdams are relatively expensive, but frequently allow full dewatering. Also, many options now available are relatively easy to install.
- Sheet pile enclosures are a much more expensive solution, but do allow full dewatering. This technique is not well suited to small streams, but can be effective on large rivers or lakes, and where staging and heavy equipment access areas are available.
- K-rails are an isolation method that does not allow full dewatering, but can be used in small to large watercourses, and in fast-water situations.
- A relatively inexpensive isolation method is filter fabric isolation. This method involves placement of gravel bags or continuous berms to 'key-in' the fabric, and subsequently staking the fabric in place. This method should be used in relatively calm water, and can be used in smaller streams. Note that this is not a dewatering method, but rather a sediment isolation method.
- Turbidity curtains should be used where sediment discharge to a stream is unavoidable. They can also be used for in-stream construction, when dewatering an area is not required.
- When used in watercourses or streams, cofferdams must be used in accordance with permit requirements.
- Manufactured diversion structures should be installed following manufacturer's specifications.

- Filter fabric and turbidity curtain isolation installation methods can be found in the specific technique descriptions that follow.

Filter Fabric Isolation Technique

Definition and Purpose

A filter fabric isolation structure is a temporary structure built into a waterway to enclose a construction area and reduce sediment pollution from construction work in or adjacent to water. This structure is composed of filter fabric, gravel bags, and steel t-posts.

Appropriate Applications

- Filter fabric may be used for construction activities such as streambank stabilization, or culvert, bridge, pier or abutment installation. It may also be used in combination with other methods, such as clean water bypasses and/or pumps.
- Filter fabric isolation is relatively inexpensive. This method involves placement of gravel bags or continuous berms to 'key-in' the fabric, and subsequently staking the fabric in place.
- If spawning gravel is used, all other components of the isolation can be removed from the stream, and the gravel may be spread out and left as salmonid spawning habitat if approved in the permit. Whether spawning gravel or other types of gravel are used, only clean washed gravel should be used as infill for the gravel bags or continuous berm.
- This method should be used in relatively calm water, and can be used in smaller streams. This is not a dewatering method, but rather a sediment isolation method.
- Water levels inside and outside the fabric curtain must be about the same, as differential heads will cause the curtain to collapse.

Limitations

- Do not use if the installation, maintenance and removal of the structures will disturb sensitive aquatic species of concern.
- Filter fabrics are not appropriate for projects where dewatering is necessary.
- Filter fabrics are not appropriate to completely dam stream flow.

Design and Installation

- For the filter fabric isolation method, a non-woven or heavy-duty fabric is recommended over standard silt fence. Using rolled geotextiles allows non-standard widths to be used.
- Anchor filter fabric with gravel bags filled with clean, washed gravel. Do not use sand. If a bag should split open, the gravel can be left in the stream, where it can provide aquatic habitat benefits. If a sandbag splits open in a watercourse, the sand could cause a decrease in water quality, and could bury sensitive aquatic habitat.
- Another anchor alternative is a continuous berm, made with the Continuous Berm Machine. This is a gravel-filled bag that can be made in very long segments. The length of the berms is usually limited to 18 ft for ease of handling (otherwise, it gets too heavy to move).

- Place the fabric on the bottom of the stream, and place either a bag of clean, washed gravel or a continuous berm over the bottom of the silt fence fabric, such that a bag-width of fabric lies on the stream bottom. The bag should be placed on what will be the outside of the isolation area.
- Pull the fabric up, and place a metal t-post immediately behind the fabric, on the inside of the isolation area; attach the silt fence to the post with three diagonal nylon ties.
- Continue placing fabric as described above until the entire work area has been isolated, staking the fabric at least every 6 ft.

Inspection and Maintenance

- Immediately repair any gaps, holes or scour.
- Remove and properly dispose of sediment buildup.
- Remove BMP upon completion of construction activity. Recycle or reuse if applicable.
- Revegetate areas disturbed by BMP removal if needed.

Turbidity Curtain Isolation Technique

Definition and Purpose

A turbidity curtain is a fabric barrier used to isolate the near shore work area. The barriers are intended to confine the suspended sediment. The curtain is a floating barrier, and thus does not prevent water from entering the isolated area; rather, it prevents suspended sediment from getting out.

Appropriate Applications

Turbidity curtains should be used where sediment discharge to a stream is unavoidable. They are used when construction activities adjoin quiescent waters, such as lakes, ponds, and slow flowing rivers. The curtains are designed to deflect and contain sediment within a limited area and provide sufficient retention time so that the sediment particles will fall out of suspension.

Limitations

- Turbidity curtains should not be used in flowing water; they are best suited for use in ponds, lakes, and very slow-moving rivers.
- Turbidity curtains should not be placed across the width of a channel.
- Removing sediment that has been deflected and settled out by the curtain may create a discharge problem through the resuspension of particles and by accidental dumping by the removal equipment.

Design and Installation

- Turbidity curtains should be oriented parallel to the direction of flow.
- The curtain should extend the entire depth of the watercourse in calm-water situations.
- In wave conditions, the curtain should extend to within 1 ft of the bottom of the watercourse, such that the curtain does not stir up sediment by hitting the bottom repeatedly. If it is

desirable for the curtain to reach the bottom in an active-water situation, a pervious filter fabric may be used for the bottom 1 ft.

- The top of the curtain should consist of flexible flotation buoys, and the bottom should be held down by a load line incorporated into the curtain fabric. The fabric should be a brightly colored impervious mesh.
- The curtain should be held in place by anchors placed at least every 100 ft.
- First, place the anchors, then tow the fabric out in a furled condition, and connect to the anchors. The anchors should be connected to the flotation devices, and not to the bottom of the curtain. Once in place, cut the furling lines, and allow the bottom of the curtain to sink.
- Consideration must be given to the probable outcome of the removal procedure. It must be determined if it will create more of a sediment problem through re-suspension of the particles or by accidental dumping of material during removal. It is recommended that the soil particles trapped by the turbidity curtain only be removed if there has been a significant change in the original contours of the affected area in the watercourse.
- Particles should always be allowed to settle for a minimum of 6 to 12 hours prior to their removal or prior to removal of the turbidity curtain.

Maintenance and Inspection:

- The curtain should be inspected for holes or other problems, and any repairs needed should be made promptly.
- Allow sediment to settle for 6 to 12 hours prior to removal of sediment or curtain. This means that after removing sediment, wait an additional 6 to 12 hours before removing the curtain.
- To remove, install furling lines along the curtain, detach from anchors, and tow out of the water.

K-rail River Isolation

Definition and Purpose

This temporary sediment control or stream isolation method uses K-rails to form the sediment deposition area, or to isolate the in-stream or near-bank construction area.

Barriers are placed end-to-end in a pre-designed configuration and gravel-filled bags are used at the toe of the barrier and at their abutting ends to seal and prevent movement of sediment beneath or through the barrier walls.

Appropriate Applications

The K-rail isolation can be used in streams with higher water velocities than many other isolation techniques.

- This technique is also useful at the toe of embankments, and cut or fill slopes.

Limitations

- The K-rail method should not be used to dewater a project site, as the barrier is not watertight.

Design and Installation

- To create a floor for the K-rail, move large rocks and obstructions. Place washed gravel and gravel-filled bags to create a level surface for K-rails to sit. Washed gravel should always be used.
- Place the bottom two K-rails adjacent to each other, and parallel to the direction of flow; fill the center portion with gravel bags. Then place the third K-rail on top of the bottom two. There should be sufficient gravel bags between the bottom K-rails such that the top rail is supported by the gravel. Place plastic sheeting around the K-rails, and secure at the bottom with gravel bags.
- Further support can be added by pinning and cabling the K-rails together. Also, large riprap and boulders can be used to support either side of the K-rail, especially where there is strong current.

Inspection and Maintenance:

- The barrier should be inspected and any leaks, holes, or other problems should be addressed immediately.
- Sediment should be allowed to settle for at least 6 to 12 hours prior to removal of sediment, and for 6 to 12 hours prior to removal of the barrier.

Stream Diversions

The selection of which stream diversion technique to use will depend upon the type of work involved, physical characteristics of the site, and the volume of water flowing through the project.

Advantages of a Pumped Diversion

- Downstream sediment transport can be nearly eliminated.
- Dewatering of the work area is possible.
- Pipes can be moved around to allow construction operations.
- The dams can serve as temporary access to the site.
- Increased flows can be managed by adding more pumping capacity.

Disadvantages of a Pumped Diversion

- Flow volume is limited by pump capacity.
- A pumped diversion requires 24 hour monitoring of pumps.
- Sudden rain could overtop dams.
- Erosion at the outlet.

- Minor in-stream disturbance is required to install and remove dams.

Advantages of Excavated Channels and Flumes

- Excavated channels isolate work from water flow and allow dewatering.
- Excavated channels can handle larger flows than pumps.

Disadvantages of Excavated Channels and Flumes

- Bypass channel or flume must be sized to handle flows, including possible floods.
- Channels must be protected from erosion.
- Flow diversion and re-direction with small dams involves in-stream disturbance and mobilization of sediment.

Design and Installation

- Installation guidelines will vary based on existing site conditions and type of diversion used.
- Pump capacity must be sufficient for design flow.
- A standby pump is required in case a primary pump fails.
- Dam materials used to create dams upstream and downstream of diversion should be erosion resistant; materials such as steel plate, sheet pile, sandbags, continuous berms, inflatable water bladders, etc., would be acceptable.

When constructing a diversion channel, begin excavation of the channel at the proposed downstream end, and work upstream. Once the watercourse to be diverted is reached and the excavated channel is stable, breach the upstream end and allow water to flow down the new channel. Once flow has been established in the diversion channel, install the diversion weir in the main channel; this will force all water to be diverted from the main channel.

Inspection and Maintenance

- Pumped diversions require 24 hour monitoring of pumps.
- Inspect embankments and diversion channels for damage to the linings, accumulating debris, sediment buildup, and adequacy of the slope protection. Remove debris and repair linings and slope protection as required. Remove holes, gaps, or scour.
- Upon completion of work, the diversion or isolation structure should be removed and flow should be redirected through the new culvert or back into the original stream channel. Recycle or reuse if applicable.
- Revegetate areas disturbed by BMP removal if needed.

Costs

Costs of clear water diversion vary considerably and can be very high.

Inspection and Maintenance

- Inspect and verify that activity-based BMPs are in place prior to the commencement of associated activities. While activities associated with the BMP are under way, inspect BMPs 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.
- Inspect BMPs subject to non-stormwater discharges daily while non-stormwater discharges occur.
- Refer to BMP-specific inspection and maintenance requirements.

References

California Bank and Shore Rock Slope Protection Design – Practitioners Guide and Field Evaluations of Riprap Methods, Caltrans Study No. F90TL03, October, 2000.

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