



### Description and Purpose

Hydroseeding typically consists of applying a mixture of a hydraulic mulch, seed, and water with the possible addition of tackifier, compost, mycorrhizae inoculant, fertilizer, and/or soil conditioner, to temporarily protect exposed soils from erosion by water and wind. Hydraulic seeding, or hydroseeding, is simply the method by which temporary or permanent seed is applied to the soil surface and temporary erosion control is established by means of the mulch component.

### Suitable Applications

Hydroseeding is suitable for disturbed areas requiring temporary protection until permanent stabilization is established, for disturbed areas that will be re-disturbed following an extended period of inactivity, or to apply permanent stabilization measures. Hydroseeding without mulch or other cover (e.g., EC-7, Geotextiles and Mats) is not a stand-alone erosion control BMP and should be combined with additional measures until vegetation establishment.

Typical applications for hydroseeding include:

- Disturbed soil/graded areas where permanent stabilization or continued earthwork is not anticipated prior to seed germination.
- Cleared and graded areas exposed to seasonal rains or temporary irrigation.
- To vegetate swales and earthen berms.
- Areas not subject to heavy wear by construction equipment or high traffic.

### Categories

EC	Erosion Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SE	Sediment Control	
TC	Tracking Control	
WE	Wind Erosion Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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

- EC-3 Hydraulic Mulch
- EC-5 Soil Binders
- EC-6 Straw Mulch
- EC-7 Geotextiles and Mats
- EC-8 Wood Mulching
- EC-14 Compost Blanket
- EC-16 Non-Vegetative Stabilization

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## Limitations

- Availability of hydroseeding equipment may be limited just prior to the rainy season and prior to storms due to high demand.
- Hydraulic seed should be applied with hydraulic mulch or a stand-alone hydroseed application should be followed by one of the following:
  - Straw mulch (see Straw Mulch EC-6)
  - Rolled erosion control products (see Geotextiles and Mats EC-7)
  - Application of Compost Blanket (see Compost Blanket EC-14)

Hydraulic seed may be used alone only on small flat surfaces when there is sufficient time in the season to ensure adequate vegetation establishment and coverage to provide adequate erosion control.

- Hydraulic seed without mulch does not provide immediate erosion control.
- Temporary seeding may not be appropriate for steep slopes (i.e., slopes readily prone to rill erosion or without sufficient topsoil).
- Temporary seeding may not be appropriate in dry periods without supplemental irrigation.
- Temporary vegetation may have to be removed before permanent vegetation is applied.
- Temporary vegetation may not be appropriate for short term inactivity (i.e., less than 3-6 months).
- Vegetation may not establish when hydroseed is applied to very compact soils.
- Mulch may inhibit germination when applied at high rates.
- This BMP consists of a mixture of several constituents (e.g., fibers/mulches, tackifiers, and other chemical constituents), some of which may be proprietary and may come pre-mixed by the manufacturer. The water quality impacts of these constituents are relatively unknown, and some may have water quality impacts due to their chemical makeup. Additionally, these constituents may require non-visible pollutant monitoring. Refer to specific chemical properties identified in the product's Safety Data Sheet (SDS), although, note that not all SDS's provide ecological information; products should be evaluated for project-specific implementation by the QSD. Refer to fact sheet EC-05, Soil Binders, for further guidance on selecting soil binders.

## Implementation

In order to select appropriate hydraulic seed mixtures, an evaluation of site conditions should be performed with respect to:

- Soil conditions
- Maintenance requirements
- Site topography and exposure (sun/wind)
- Sensitive adjacent areas

- Season and climate
- Water availability
- Vegetation types
- Plans for permanent vegetation

The local office of the U.S.D.A. Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Resource Conservation Districts and Agricultural Extension Service can provide information on appropriate seed mixes.

The following steps should be followed for implementation:

- Where appropriate or feasible, soil should be prepared to receive the seed by disking or otherwise scarifying (See EC-15, Soil Preparation) the surface to eliminate crust, improve air and water infiltration and create a more favorable environment for germination and growth.
- Avoid use of hydraulic seed in areas where the BMP would be incompatible with future earthwork activities.
- Hydraulic seed can be applied using a multiple step or one step process.
  - In a multiple step process, hydraulic seed is applied first, followed by mulch or a Rolled Erosion Control Product (RECP).
  - In the one step process, hydraulic seed is applied with hydraulic mulch in a hydraulic matrix. When the one step process is used to apply the mixture of fiber, seed, etc., the seed rate should be increased to compensate for all seeds not having direct contact with the soil.
- All hydraulically seeded areas should have mulch, or alternate erosion control cover to keep seeds in place and to moderate soil moisture and temperature until the seeds germinate and grow.
- All seeds should be in conformance with the California State Seed Law of the Department of Agriculture. Each seed bag should be delivered to the site sealed and clearly marked as to species, purity, percent germination, dealer's guarantee, and dates of test. The container should be labeled to clearly reflect the amount of Pure Live Seed (PLS) contained. All legume seed should be pellet inoculated. Inoculant sources should be species specific and should be applied at a rate of 2 lb of inoculant per 100 lb seed.
- Commercial fertilizer should conform to the requirements of the California Food and Agricultural Code, which can be found at: [https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/docs/Fertilizer\\_Law\\_and\\_Regs.pdf](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/is/docs/Fertilizer_Law_and_Regs.pdf). Fertilizer should be pelleted or granular form.
- Follow up applications should be made as needed to cover areas of poor coverage or germination/vegetation establishment and to maintain adequate soil protection.
- Avoid over spray onto roads, sidewalks, drainage channels, existing vegetation, etc.
- Additional guidance on the comparison and selection of temporary slope stabilization methods is provided in Appendix B "Guidance on Selection of Temporary Slope Stabilization Techniques" of the CASQA Construction BMP Handbook.

## 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.
- Areas where erosion is evident should be repaired and BMPs re-applied as soon as possible. Care should be exercised to minimize the damage to protected areas while making repairs, as any area damaged will require re-application of BMPs.
- Where seeds fail to germinate, or they germinate and die, the area must be re-seeded, fertilized, and mulched within the planting season, using not less than half the original application rates.
- Irrigation systems, if applicable, should be inspected daily while in use to identify system malfunctions and line breaks. When line breaks are detected, the system must be shut down immediately and breaks repaired before the system is put back into operation.
- Irrigation systems should be inspected for complete coverage and adjusted as needed to maintain complete coverage.

## References and Additional Resources

Construction Site Best Management Practices (BMPs) Manual CTSW-RT-24-425.11.1, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), March 2024.

Guidance for Temporary Soil Stabilization, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), July 2003.

Soil Stabilization BMP Research for Erosion and Sediment Controls: Cost Survey Technical Memorandum, State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), July 2007.