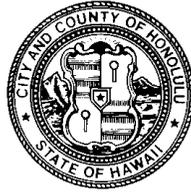


DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
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Soil Sediment Runoff From Yards

Background Information

The Clean Water Act was established in 1972 with the goal to make US waters clean enough to be swimmable and fishable. To do this, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) established the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program.

Since the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), or drainage system, discharges directly to streams and the ocean, the City is required to obtain an NPDES permit from the State Department of Health. This permit requires the City to reduce the amount of pollutants discharged from the City's MS4 in order to meet the water quality standards of the State of Hawaii to the maximum extent practicable.

The City's MS4 is the system for the conveyance of storm water, and includes roads and streets with drainage systems, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ditches, man-made channels, and storm drains owned by the City.

Components of the City's permit include investigating complaints of pollutant discharges, pursuing enforcement action against dischargers, and requiring licenses for all private storm drain connections to the City's MS4.

What is the law saying?

The City's MS4 was designed to convey storm water, not trash or pollutants. It is unlawful to discharge pollutants into the City's storm drainage system.

Soil sediment is a typical pollutant that can flow onto roadways from unvegetated areas. Soil sediment can also get tracked onto the road by vehicles that have been parked on lawns, sidewalk planting strips, or poorly vegetated frontages. When it rains, sediment is picked up by storm water and carried into our streams and goes out to the ocean. Sediment can clog fish gills, cloud water, block sunlight needed by aquatic plants, and smother coral reefs. It can also block or reduce the capacity of the storm drain system causing flooding.

Homeowners are responsible for all conditions on their property that may cause pollution, including poorly vegetated areas that release sediment into the drainage system.



Soil from the unvegetated lawn is flowing over the sidewalk and into the gutter.

The Ordinance

The Revised Ordinances of Honolulu addresses the potential discharge of pollutants into the City's MS4 in the following sections:

Sec. 14-12.12 Connection to city-owned separate storm sewer system

(a) (1) All connections from nonmunicipal and private drainage systems to the city-owned separate storm sewer system shall require a storm drain connection license issued by the chief engineer.

Sec. 14-22 Discharge of effluent other than storm water runoff

(a) No person shall discharge any effluent other than storm water runoff onto any public right of way and/or into any drainage facility without first obtaining a permit from the chief engineer.

Sec. 14-12.23 Environmental quality control

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person to discharge or cause to be discharged any pollutant into any drainage facility which causes a pollution problem in state waters, or causes a violation of any provision of the city NPDES permit or the water quality standards of the State of Hawaii.

Examples of BMPs



Plant grass to prevent sediment from flowing from your yard. Temporary control measures should be used until grass has been established.



Filter socks should be placed to contain sediment from flowing out of the landscaping area.



A turf-reinforcing mat over a planted area stabilizes bare soil until vegetation is established.



Mulch cover protects the soil surface, and helps to prevent erosion.

What should I do to prevent sediment pollution from my yard?

Stabilize any bare soil or unvegetated areas with one of the following:

- Vegetation, such as grass or ground cover
- Mulch or gravel
- Pavers, such as turf blocks, which stabilize the ground for parking and allows storm water to infiltrate into the ground.
- Pavement

Contain sediment to prevent it from leaving your property. Keep soil below the sidewalk or curb to prevent soil runoff. One of the following temporary control measures should be maintained until vegetation is fully established to stabilize the soil:

- Place filter socks along the downslope edge
- Install silt fences at the downslope edge
- Place a turf-reinforcing mat over the planted area

For examples of these best management practices (BMPs) to prevent sediment pollution, see photos at left.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is sediment?

A: Sediment is particles of dirt, soil, sand, clay, silt, and other substances that comes from the natural weathering and erosion of the land and decomposing plants.

Q: Why is sediment considered a pollutant? Isn't soil just a natural material?

A: Although sediment is a natural material, it is considered a pollutant in storm water because of its negative impact on aquatic life and water quality. In addition, the EPA considers it to be the most prevalent pollutant in storm water runoff.

Q: Why are property owners required to maintain their own properties?

A: The EPA has required the State to set limits to sediment discharges to its waterways as an effort to improve water quality. In order to meet the limits set by the State, residents must maintain their property to prevent sediment from being picked up by storm water, which flows into the drainage system and ultimately to State waters. As such, it is against the law to knowingly and willfully discharge pollutants, including soil and sediment, into any drainage facility.

Q: Who is responsible for maintaining the sidewalk area fronting my property?

A: It is the homeowner's legal responsibility to maintain and keep sidewalks, curb, and gutters in front of their property clean. The sidewalks are for the general public and should also be kept clear of obstructions. For more information, see Revised Ordinances of Honolulu Section 14-20.1.

Q: Are there any penalties for runoff during a natural rain event?

A: Yes, the City could issue warning or fines for sediment runoff. You are required to prevent loose soil, sand, saw dust or any other material that can be washed from your property into the storm drain system.

Enforcement

The City may issue warnings or fines depending on the severity of the violation, which could range from \$1,000 to \$25,000 per violation per day.

How can I get more information?

Storm Water Quality Branch..... 768-3242
Environmental Concern Line..... 768-3300

Visit the City's website at www.cleanwaterhonolulu.com