



## Description and Purpose

Non-vegetative stabilization methods are used for temporary or permanent stabilization of areas prone to erosion and should be used only where vegetative options are not feasible; examples include:

- Areas of vehicular or pedestrian traffic such as roads or paths;
- Arid environments where vegetation would not provide timely ground coverage, or would require excessive irrigation;
- Rocky substrate, infertile or droughty soils where vegetation would be difficult to establish; and
- Areas where vegetation will not grow adequately within the construction time frame.

There are several non-vegetative stabilization methods and selection should be based on site-specific conditions.

**Decomposed Granite (DG)** is a permanent erosion protection method that consists of a layer of stabilized decomposed granite placed over an erodible surface.

**Degradable Mulches** of various types (see EC-3, EC-6, EC-8) can be used for temporary non-vegetative stabilization; examples include straw mulch, compost, wood chips or hydraulic mulch.

**Geotextiles and Mats** can be used for temporary non-vegetative stabilization (see EC-7). These BMPs are typically manufactured from degradable or synthetic materials and are

## Categories

EC	Erosion Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SE	Sediment Control	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
TR	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

None

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designed and specified based on their functional longevity, i.e., how long they will persist and provide erosion protection. All geotextiles and mats should be replaced when they exceed their functional longevity or when permanent stabilization methods are instituted.

**Gravel Mulch** is a non-degradable erosion control product that is composed of washed and screened coarse to very coarse gravel, 16 mm to 64 mm (0.6" - 2.5"), similar to an AASHTO No. 3 coarse aggregate.

**Rock Slope Protection** consists of utilizing large rock or rip-rap (4" - 24") to stabilize slopes with a high erosion potential and those subject to scour along waterways.

**Soil Binders** can be used for temporary non-vegetative stabilization (see EC-5). The key to their use is functional longevity. In most cases, the soil binder will need to be routinely monitored and re-applied to maintain an erosion-resistant coverage.

## Suitable Applications

Non-vegetated stabilization methods are suitable for use on disturbed soil areas and on material stockpiles that need to be temporarily or permanently protected from erosion by water and wind. Non-vegetated stabilization should only be utilized when vegetation cannot be established in the required timeframe, due to soil or climactic conditions, or where vegetation may be a potential fire hazard.

**Decomposed Granite (DG) and Gravel Mulch** are suitable for use in areas where vegetation establishment is difficult, on flat surfaces, trails and pathways, and when used in conjunction with a stabilizer or tackifier, on shallow slopes (i.e., 10:1 [H:V]). DG and gravel can also be used on shallow rocky slopes where vegetation cannot be established for permanent erosion control.

**Degradable Mulches** can be used to cover and protect soil surfaces from erosion both in temporary and permanent applications. In many cases, the use of mulches by themselves requires routine inspection and re-application. See EC-3 Hydraulic Mulch, EC-6 Straw Mulch, EC-8 Wood Mulch, or EC-14 Compost Blankets for more information.

**Geotextiles and Mats** can be used as a temporary stand-alone soil stabilization method. Depending on material selection, geotextiles and mats can be a short-term (3 mos – 1 year) or long-term (1-2 years) temporary stabilization method. For more information on geotextiles and mats see EC-7 Geotextiles and Mats.

**Rock Slope Protection** can be used when the slopes are subject to scour or have a high erosion potential, such as slopes adjacent to flowing waterways or slopes subject to overflow from detention facilities (spillways).

**Soil Binders** can be used for temporary stabilization of stockpiles and disturbed areas not subject to heavy traffic. See EC-5 Soil Binders for more information.

## Limitations

### General

- Refer to EC-3, EC-6, EC-8, and EC-14 for limitations on use of mulches. Refer to EC-7 for limitations on use of geotextiles and mats. Refer to EC-5 for limitations on use of Soil Binders.

## ***Decomposed Granite***

- Not available in some geographic regions.
- If not tackified, material may be susceptible to erosion even on slight slopes (e.g., 30:1 [H:V]).
- Installed costs may be more expensive than vegetative stabilization methods.

## ***Gravel Mulch***

- Availability is limited in some geographic regions.
- If not properly screened and washed, can contain fine material that can erode and/or create dust problems.
- If inadequately sized, material may be susceptible to erosion on sloped areas.
- Pore spaces fill with dirt and debris over time; may provide a growing medium for weeds.

## ***Rock Slope Protection***

- Installation is labor intensive.
- Installed costs can be significantly higher than vegetative stabilization methods.
- Rounded stones may not be used on slopes greater than 2:1 [H:V].

## **Implementation**

### ***General***

Non-vegetated stabilization should be used in accordance with the following general guidance:

- Should be used in conjunction with other BMPs, including drainage, erosion controls and sediment controls.
- Refer to EC-3, EC-6, EC-8, and EC-14 for implementation details for mulches. Refer to EC-7 for implementation details for geotextiles and mats. Refer to EC-5 for implementation details for soil binders.
- Non-vegetated stabilization measures should be implemented as soon as the disturbance in the areas they are intended to protect has ceased.
- Additional guidance on the comparison and selection of temporary slope stabilization methods is provided in Appendix F of the Handbook.

### ***Decomposed Granite Stabilization***

- If used for a road or path should be installed on a prepared base.
- Should be mixed with a stabilizer if used for roads or pathways, or on slope applications.
- Though porous it is recommended to prevent standing water on or next to a decomposed granite road or pathway.

## ***Gravel Mulch***

- Should be sized based on slope, rainfall, and upgradient run-on conditions. Stone size should be increased as potential for erosion increases (steeper slopes, high intensity rainfall).
- If permanent, a weed control fabric should be placed prior to installation.
- Should be installed at a minimum 2" depth.
- Should completely cover all exposed surfaces.

## ***Rock Slope Protection***

- Rock slope protection installation should follow Caltrans Standard Specification 72-2: Rock Slope Protection. Refer to the specification for rock conformity requirements and installation methods.
- When using rock slope protection, rock size and installation method should be specified by an Engineer.
- A geotextile fabric should be placed prior to installation.

## **Costs**

- Costs are highly variable depending not only on technique chosen, but also on materials chosen within specific techniques. In addition, availability of certain materials will vary by region/location, which will also affect the cost. Costs of mulches, geotextiles and mats, and soil binders are presented in their respective fact sheets. Costs for decomposed granite, gravel mulch stabilization and rock slope protection may be higher depending on location and availability of materials. Caltrans has provided an estimate for gravel mulch of \$10 - \$15/yd<sup>2</sup> in flat areas and \$11 - \$23/yd<sup>2</sup> on side slopes.

## **Inspection and Maintenance**

### ***General***

- 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.
- For permanent installation, require inspection periodically and after major storm events to look for signs of erosion or damage to the stabilization.
- All damage should be repaired immediately.
- Refer to EC-3, EC-6, EC-8, and EC-14 for inspection and maintenance requirements for mulches. Refer to EC-7 for inspection and maintenance requirements for geotextiles and mats. Refer to EC-5 for inspection and maintenance requirements for soil binders.

### ***Decomposed Granite and Gravel Mulch Stabilization***

- Rake out and add decomposed granite or gravel as needed to areas subject to rill erosion. Inspect upgradient drainage controls and repair/modify as necessary.

- Should remain stable under loose surface material. Any significant problem areas should be repaired to restore uniformity to the installation.

## References

Arid Zone Forestry: A Guide for Field Technicians. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 1989.

Design of Roadside Channels with Flexible Linings, Hydraulic Engineering Circular Number 15, Third Edition, Federal Highway Administration, 2007.

Design Standards for Urban Infrastructure - Soft Landscape Design, Department of Territory and Municipal Services - Australian Capital Territory [http://www.tams.act.gov.au/work/standards\\_and\\_procedures/design\\_standards\\_for\\_urban\\_infrastructure](http://www.tams.act.gov.au/work/standards_and_procedures/design_standards_for_urban_infrastructure)

Erosion and Sediment Control Handbook: A Guide for Protection of State Waters through the use of Best Management Practices during Land Disturbing Activities, Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, 2002.

Gravel Mulch, Landscape Architecture Non-Standard Specification 10-2, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/roadside/detail-gm.htm>

Maine Erosion and Sediment Control BMPs, DEPLW0588, Maine Department of Environmental Protection: Bureau of Land and Water Quality, 2003.

National Menu of Best Management Practices, US Environmental Protection Agency, 2006.

Standard Specification 72-2: Rock Slope Protection. California Department of Transportation, 2006.

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