



Description and Purpose

Biofilter bags, or bio-bags, are a multi-purpose sediment control BMP consisting of a plastic mesh bag filled with 100% recycled wood product waste. Biofilter bags come in a variety of sizes (30" x 18" and 30" x 9" being common) and generally have between 1-2 cubic yards of recycled wood waste (or wood chips). Biofilter bags work by detaining flow and allowing a slow rate of discharge through the wood media. This action removes suspended sediment through gravity settling of the detained water and filtration within the bag.

Suitable Applications

Biofilter bags are a short-term BMP that can be rapidly deployed, maintained, and replaced. Biofilter bags can be an effective short-term solution to place in developed rills to prevent further erosion until permanent measures can be established. Suitable short-term applications include:

- As a linear sediment control measure:
 - Below the toe of slopes and erodible slopes
 - Below other small cleared areas
 - Along the perimeter of a site (with low-expected flow)
 - Down slope of exposed soil areas
 - Around temporary stockpiles and spoil areas
 - Parallel to a roadway to keep sediment off paved areas

Categories

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

- SE-1 Silt Fence
- SE-4 Check Dams
- SE-5 Fiber Roll
- SE-6 Gravel Bag Berm
- SE-8 Sandbag Barrier
- SE-10 Storm Drain Inlet Protection

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- Along streams and channels
- As linear erosion control measure:
 - Along the face and at grade breaks of exposed and erodible slopes to shorten slope length and spread runoff as sheet flow
 - At the top of slopes to divert runoff away from disturbed slopes
 - As check dams across mildly sloped construction roads
- Inlet Protection (See SE-10)
- Supplement to silt fences or other sediment control devices

Limitations

- Short life-span (maximum usefulness of 2-3 months and should be replaced more frequently if needed); regular maintenance and replacement required to ensure effectiveness. Bags will rapidly fill with sediment and reduce permeability.
- Easily damaged by construction vehicles.
- If not properly staked, will fail on slope applications.
- If improperly installed can allow undercutting or side-cutting flow.
- Not effective where water velocities or volumes are high.
- Potentially buoyant and easily displaced if not properly installed.

Implementation

General

Biofilter bags are a relatively low cost temporary BMP that are easily deployed and have a simple installation that can be performed by hand. Without proper installation, however, biofilter bags can fail due to their light weight, potential displacement, and multiple joint locations. One of the benefits of utilizing biofilter bags is that the media (wood-product) can be recycled or used onsite when no longer needed (where acceptable).

Design and Layout – Linear control

- Locate biofilter bags on level contours.
 - Slopes between 20:1 and 4:1 (H:V): Biofilter bags should be placed at a maximum interval of 20 ft, with the first row near the slope toe.
 - Slopes between 4:1 and 2:1 (H:V): Biofilter bags should be placed at a maximum interval of 15 ft, with the first row near the slope toe.
 - Slopes 2:1 (H:V) or steeper: Biofilter bags should be placed at a maximum interval of 10 ft., with the first row placed the slope toe.

- Turn the ends of the biofilter bag barriers up slope to prevent runoff from going around the berm.
- Allow sufficient space up slope from the biofilter bag berm to allow ponding, and to provide room for sediment storage.
- Stake biofilter bags into a 1 to 2 in. deep trench with a width equal to the bag.
 - Drive one stake at each end of the bag.
 - Use wood stakes with a nominal classification of 0.75 by 0.75 in. and minimum length of 24 in.
- Biofilter bags should be overlapped (6 in.), not abutted.

Costs

Pre-filled biofilter bags cost approximately \$2.50-\$3.50 per bag, dependent upon size.

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.
- Biofilter bags exposed to sunlight will need to be replaced every two to three months due to degrading of the bags.
- Reshape or replace biofilter bags as needed.
- Repair washouts or other damage as needed.
- Sediment that is retained by the BMP should be periodically removed in order to maintain BMP effectiveness. Sediment should be removed when the sediment accumulation reaches one-third of the barrier height.
- Remove biofilter bag berms when no longer needed. Remove sediment accumulation and clean, re-grade, and stabilize the area. Biofilter media may be used on-site, if allowed.

References

Catalog of Stormwater Best Management Practices for Idaho Cities and Counties. Volume 2, Section 7, BMP 34 – Biofilter Bags, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, 2005.

Erosion and Sediment Control Manual, Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, February 2005.

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