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SEDIMENT TRAPS AND BARRIERS

6.64

SKIMMER SEDIMENT BASIN

Definition

An earthen embankment suitably located to capture runoff, with a trapezoidal spillway lined with an impermeable geotextile or laminated plastic membrane, and equipped with a floating skimmer for dewatering.

Purpose

Sediment basins are designed to provide an area for runoff to pool and settle out a portion of the sediment carried down gradient. Past designs used a perforated riser for dewatering, which allowed water to leave the basin from all depths. One way to improve the sediment capture rate is to have an outlet which dewaters the basin from the top of the water column where the water is cleanest. A skimmer is probably the most common method to dewater a sediment basin from the surface. The basic concept is that the skimmer does not dewater the basin as fast as runoff enters it, but instead allows the basin to fill and then slowly drain over hours or days. This process has two effects. First, the sediment in the runoff has more time to settle out prior to discharge. Second, a pool of water forms early in a storm event and this further increases sedimentation rates in the basin. Many of the storms will produce more volume than the typical sediment basin capacity and flow rates in excess of the skimmer capability, resulting in flow over the emergency spillway. This water is also coming from the top of the water column and has thereby been "treated" to remove sediment as much as possible. (Adapted from SoilFacts: Dewatering Sediment Basins Using Surface Outlets. N. C. State University, Soil Science Department.)

Conditions Where Practice Applies

Skimmer sediment basins are needed where drainage areas are too large for temporary sediment traps. Do not locate the skimmer sediment basin in intermittent or perennial streams.

Planning Considerations

Select locations for skimmer basins during initial site evaluation. Install skimmer sediment basins before any site grading takes place within the drainage area.

Select skimmer sediment basin sites to capture sediment from all areas that are not treated adequately by other sediment control measures. Always consider access for cleanout and disposal of the trapped sediment. Locations where a pond can be formed by constructing a low dam across a natural swale are generally preferred to sites that require excavation. Where practical, divert sediment-free runoff away from the basin.

A skimmer is a sedimentation basin dewatering control device that withdraws water from the basin's water surface, thus removing the highest quality water for delivery to the uncontrolled environment. A skimmer is shown in Figure 6.64a. By properly sizing the skimmer's control orifice, the skimmer can be made to dewater a design hydrologic event in a prescribed period. Because the spillway is actually used relatively frequently, it should be carefully stabilized using geotextiles, or rock if necessary, that can withstand the expected flows. The spillway should be placed as far from the inlet of the basin as possible to maximize sedimentation before discharge. The spillway should be located in natural groundcover to the greatest extent possible

The costs of using a skimmer system are similar, or occasionally less, than a conventional rock outlet or perforated riser. However, the basin is more efficient in removing sediment. Another advantage of the skimmer is that it can be reused on future projects. The main disadvantage of the skimmer is that it does require frequent maintenance, primarily in removing debris from the inlet.

A skimmer must dewater the basin from the top of the water surface. The rate of dewatering must be controlled. A dewatering time of 2-5 days is required. **Any skimmer design that dewaters from the surface at a controlled rate is acceptable.**

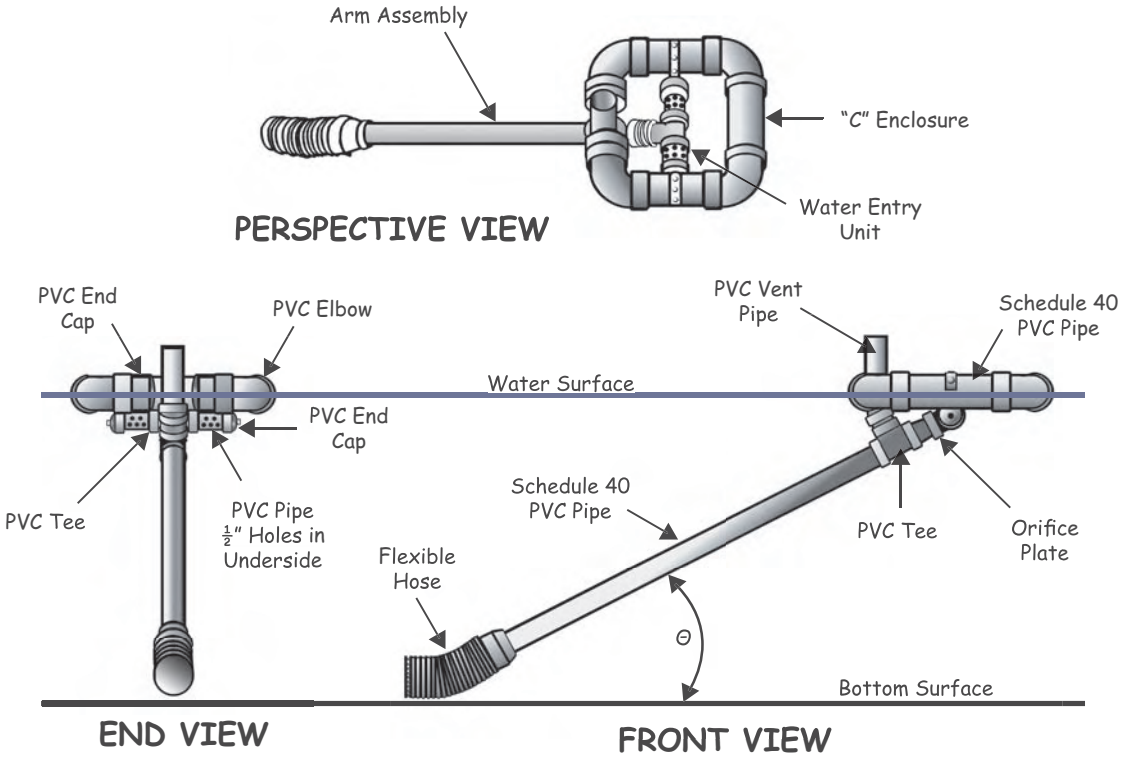

Figure 6.64a Schematic of a skimmer, from Pennsylvania Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Manual, March, 2000.

SKIMMER ORIFICE DIAMETER

The orifice of a skimmer should be selected in order to achieve the desired dewatering time. **Three days** is probably the optimal length of time for temporary sediment controls. It allows longer settling time for suspended solids remaining in the basin after a storm event, while dewatering the basin in less time than the average interval between rainfall events. Design criteria for permanent stormwater detention basins in the Division of Water Quality Stormwater BMP Manual require 2-5 days for dewatering.

Procedure

First determine the desired dewatering time in days (t_d) and the volume (V) of water to be released in that time period. Dividing the volume in cubic feet by the dewatering time in days gives a flow rate Q_d in cubic feet per day.

$$Q_d = V / t_d \ (ft^3/day)$$

Next determine the head on the skimmer orifice. Table 6.64a has the values for various sizes of the Faircloth skimmer.

Table 6.64a Head on orifice of various skimmer sizes

Skimmer Size (in.)	Head on Orifice (ft.)
1.5	0.125
2	0.167
2.5	0.208
3	0.25
4	0.333
5	0.333
6	0.417
8	0.5

The desired orifice diameter (D) in inches can now be calculated using the equation

$$D = \sqrt{Q_d /(2310 * \sqrt{H})} \quad \text{(inches)}$$

Example: Select a skimmer that will dewater a 20,000 ft^3 skimmer basin in 3 days.

1. $Q_d = V / t_d \ (ft^3/day) = 20{,}000\ ft^3 / 3\ days = 6670 \ (ft^3/day)$.

2. Try a 4 inch skimmer, with H = 0.333 ft. (Table 6.64a)

3. $D = \sqrt{Q_d /(2310 * \sqrt{H})}$ (in.) $= \sqrt{6670 \ ft^3/day /(2310 * \sqrt{0.333\ ft.})}$ (in.)

$= 2.24$ inches (Use 2 ¼ inches)

The desired dewatering time can also be achieved by adjusting the skimmer size and orifice diameter using the spreadsheet entitled "Sediment Control Measures", which is available at http://portal.ncdenr.org/web/lr/links

Figure 6.64b Example Excel Spreadsheet

4	Skimmer Size (inches)
0.333	Head on Skimmer (feet)
2.25	Orifice Size (1/4 in increment)
2.96	Dewatering Time (days)

Skimmer Size (Inches)	Head on Skimmer (Feet)
1.5	0.125
2	0.167
2.5	0.208
3	0.25
4	0.333
5	0.333
6	0.417
8	0.5

Adapted from training materials developed by Albert R. Jarrett, Ph.D. for Erosion and Sediment Control/Stormwater Certification for NC DOT Projects Level IIIA and IIIB, N.C. State University, Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, 2007.

Design Criteria

Summary:	**Skimmer Sediment Basin**
Primary Spillway:	Trapezoidal spillway with impermeable membrane
Maximum Drainage Area:	10 acres
Minimum Volume:	1800 cubic feet per acre of disturbed area
Minimum Surface Area:	325 square feet per cfs of Q_{10} peak inflow
Minimum L/W Ratio:	2:1
Maximum L/W Ratio:	6:1
Minimum Depth:	2 feet
Dewatering Mechanism:	Skimmer
Minimum Dewatering Time:	2 days
Baffles Required:	3 baffles*

(*Note: Basins less than 20 feet in length may use 2 baffles.)

Drainage areas—Limit drainage areas to 10 acres.

Design basin life—Ensure a design basin life of 3 years or less.

Dam height—Limit dam height to 5 feet.

Basin locations—Select areas that:

- Provide capacity for storage of sediment from as much of the planned disturbed area as practical;
- Exclude runoff from undisturbed areas where practical;
- Provide access for sediment removal throughout the life of the project;
- Interfere minimally with construction activities.

Basin shape—Ensure that the flow length to basin width ratio is at least 2:1 to improve trapping efficiency. Length is measured at the elevation of the principal spillway.

Storage volume—Ensure that the sediment storage volume of the basin, as measured to the elevation of the crest of the principal spillway, is at least 1,800 cubic feet per acre for the disturbed area draining into the basin (1,800 cubic feet is equivalent to half an inch of sediment per acre of basin disturbed area).

Remove sediment from the basin when approximately one-half of the storage volume has been filled.

Spillway capacity—The spillway system must carry the peak runoff from the 10-year storm with a minimum 1 foot of freeboard in the spillway. Base runoff computations on the disturbed soil cover conditions expected during the effective life of the structure.

Sediment cleanout elevation—Determine the elevation at which the invert of the basin would be half-full. This elevation should also be marked in the field with a permanent stake set at this ground elevation (not the top of the stake).

Basin dewatering—The basin should be provided with a surface outlet. A floating skimmer should be attached to a Schedule 40 PVC barrel pipe of the same diameter as the skimmer arm. The orifice in the skimmer will control the rate of dewatering. The skimmer should be sized to dewater the basin in 2-5 days).

Outlet Protection—Discharge velocities must be within allowable limits for the receiving stream (References: *Outlet Protection*).

Basin spillway—Construct the entire flow area of the spillway in undisturbed soil if possible. Make the cross section trapezoidal with side slopes of 3:1 or flatter.

- Capacity—The minimum design capacity of the spillway must be the peak rate of runoff from the 10-year storm. Maximum depth of flow during the peak runoff should be 6 inches. In no case should the freeboard of the spillway be less than 1 foot above the design depth of flow.
- Velocity—Ensure that the velocity of flow discharged from the basin is nonerosive for the existing conditions. When velocities exceed that allowable for the receiving areas, provide outlet protection (References: *Outlet Protection*).

Embankment—Ensure that embankments for skimmer sediment basins do not exceed 5 feet in height (measured at the center line from the original ground surface to the top of the embankment). Keep the crest of the spillway outlet a minimum of 1.5 feet below the top of the embankment. Additional freeboard may be added to the embankment height which allows flow through a designated bypass location. Construct embankments with a minimum top width of 5 feet and side slopes of 2:1 or flatter. Machine compact the embankments.

Excavation—Where sediment pools are formed or enlarged by excavation, keep side slopes at 2:1 or flatter for safety.

Erosion protection—Stabilize all areas disturbed by construction (except the lower half of the sediment pool) by suitable means immediately after completing the basin (References: *Surface Stabilization*).

Trap efficiency—Improve sediment basin trapping efficiency by employing the following considerations in the basin design:

- Surface area—In the design of the settling pond, allow the largest surface area possible.
- Length—Maximize the length-to-width ratio of the basin to prevent short circuiting, and ensure use of the entire design settling area.
- Baffles—Provide a minimum of three porous baffles to evenly distribute flow across the basin and reduce turbulence.
- Inlets—Area between the sediment inlets and the basin should be stabilized by geotextile material, with or without rocks (Figure 6.64c shows the area with rocks). The inlet to basin should be located the greatest distance possible from the principal spillway.

- Dewatering—Allow the maximum reasonable detention period before the basin is completely dewatered (at least 48 hours).
- Inflow rate—Reduce the inflow velocity and divert all sediment-free runoff.

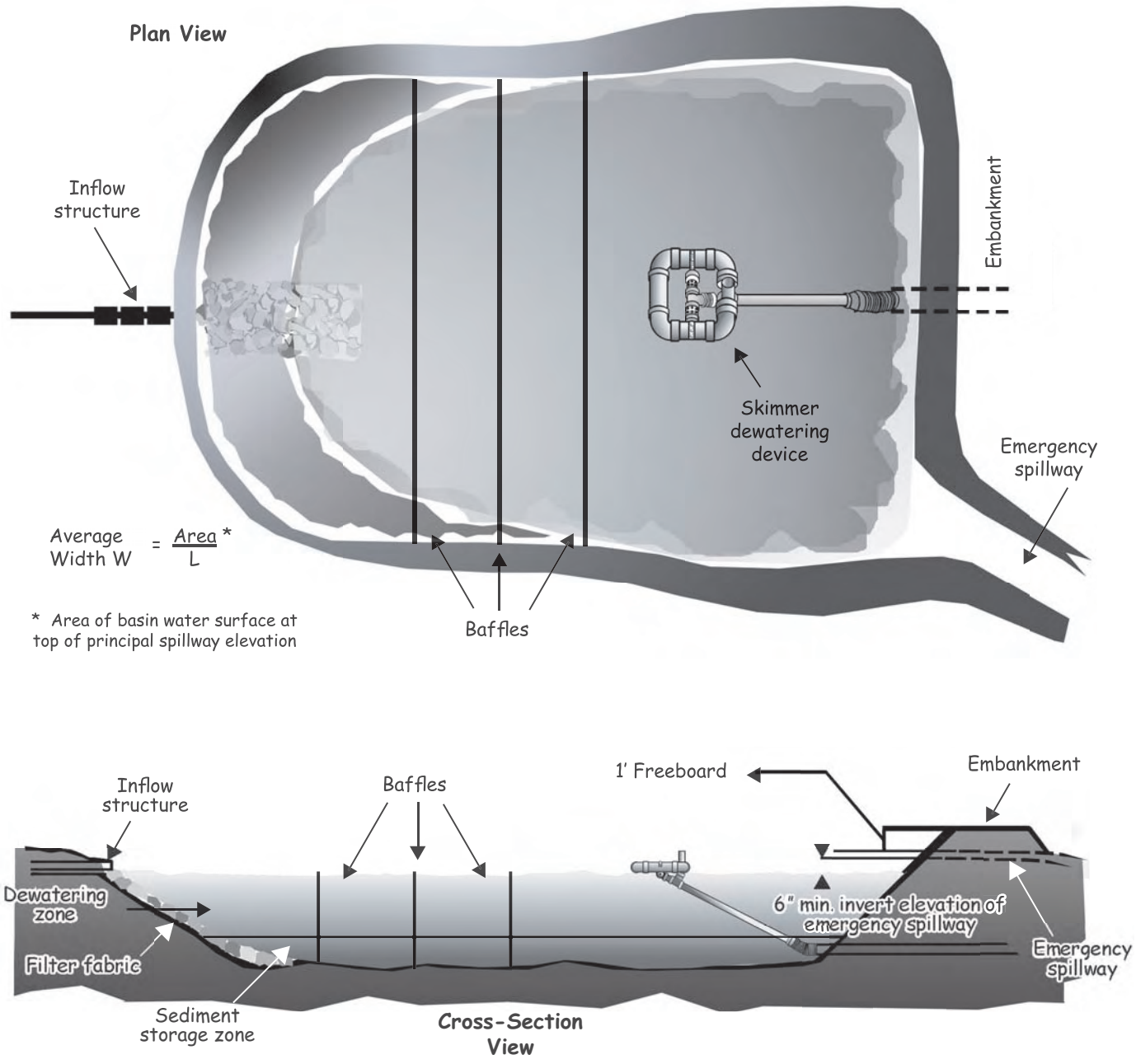

Figure 6.64c Example of a sediment basin with a skimmer outlet and emergency spillway. From Pennsylvania Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Manual, March, 2000.

Construction Specifications

1. Clear, grub, and strip the area under the embankment of all vegetation and root mat. Remove all surface soil containing high amounts of organic matter and stockpile or dispose of it properly. Haul all objectionable material to the designated disposal area. Place temporary sediment control measures below basin as needed

2. Ensure that fill material for the embankment is free of roots, woody vegetation, organic matter, and other objectionable material. Place the fill in lifts not to exceed 9 inches, and machine compact it. Over fill the embankment 6 inches to allow for settlement.

3. Shape the basin to the specified dimensions. Prevent the skimming device from settling into the mud by excavating a shallow pit under the skimmer or providing a low support under the skimmer of stone or timber.

4. Place the barrel (typically 4-inch Schedule 40 PVC pipe) on a firm, smooth foundation of impervious soil. Do not use pervious material such as sand, gravel, or crushed stone as backfill around the pipe. Place the fill material around the pipe spillway in 4-inch layers and compact it under and around the pipe to at least the same density as the adjacent embankment. Care must be taken not to raise the pipe from the firm contact with its foundation when compacting under the pipe haunches.

Place a minimum depth of 2 feet of compacted backfill over the pipe spillway before crossing it with construction equipment. In no case should the pipe conduit be installed by cutting a trench through the dam after the embankment is complete.

5. Assemble the skimmer following the manufacturers instructions, or as designed.

6. Lay the assembled skimmer on the bottom of the basin with the flexible joint at the inlet of the barrel pipe. Attach the flexible joint to the barrel pipe and position the skimmer over the excavated pit or support. Be sure to attach a rope to the skimmer and anchor it to the side of the basin. This will be used to pull the skimmer to the side for maintenance.

7. Earthen spillways—Install the spillway in undisturbed soil to the greatest extent possible. The achievement of planned elevations, grade, design width, and entrance and exit channel slopes are critical to the successful operation of the spillway. The spillway should be lined with laminated plastic or impermeable geotextile fabric. The fabric must be wide and long enough to cover the bottom and sides and extend onto the top of the dam for anchoring in a trench. The edges may be secured with 8-inch staples or pins. The fabric must be long enough to extend down the slope and exit onto stable ground. The width of the fabric must be one piece, not joined or spliced; otherwise water can get under the fabric. If the length of the fabric is insufficient for the entire length of the spillway, multiple sections, spanning the complete width, may be used. The upper section(s) should overlap the lower section(s) so that water cannot flow under the fabric. Secure the upper edge and sides of the fabric in a trench with staples or pins. (Adapted from "A Manual for Designing, Installing and Maintaining Skimmer Sediment Basins." February, 1999. J. W. Faircloth & Son.).

8. Inlets—Discharge water into the basin in a manner to prevent erosion. Use temporary slope drains or diversions with outlet protection to divert sediment-laden water to the upper end of the pool area to improve basin trap efficiency (References: *Runoff Control Measures and Outlet Protection*).

9. Erosion control—Construct the structure so that the disturbed area is minimized. Divert surface water away from bare areas. Complete the embankment before the area is cleared. Stabilize the emergency spillway embankment and all other disturbed areas above the crest of the principal spillway immediately after construction (References: *Surface Stabilization*).

10. Install porous baffles as specified in Practice 6.65, *Porous Baffles*.

11. After all the sediment-producing areas have been permanently stabilized, remove the structure and all the unstable sediment. Smooth the area to blend with the adjoining areas and stabilize properly (References: *Surface Stabilization*).

Maintenance

Inspect skimmer sediment basins at least weekly and after each significant (one-half inch or greater) rainfall event and repair immediately. Remove sediment and restore the basin to its original dimensions when sediment accumulates to one-half the height of the first baffle. Pull the skimmer to one side so that the sediment underneath it can be excavated. Excavate the sediment from the entire basin, not just around the skimmer or the first cell. Make sure vegetation growing in the bottom of the basin does not hold down the skimmer.

Repair the baffles if they are damaged. Re-anchor the baffles if water is flowing underneath or around them.

If the skimmer is clogged with trash and there is water in the basin, usually jerking on the rope will make the skimmer bob up and down and dislodge the debris and restore flow. If this does not work, pull the skimmer over to the side of the basin and remove the debris. Also check the orifice inside the skimmer to see if it is clogged; if so remove the debris.

If the skimmer arm or barrel pipe is clogged, the orifice can be removed and the obstruction cleared with a plumber's snake or by flushing with water. Be sure and replace the orifice before repositioning the skimmer.

Check the fabric lined spillway for damage and make any required repairs with fabric that spans the full width of the spillway. Check the embankment, spillways, and outlet for erosion damage, and inspect the embankment for piping and settlement. Make all necessary repairs immediately. Remove all trash and other debris from the skimmer and pool areas.

Freezing weather can result in ice forming in the basin. Some special precautions should be taken in the winter to prevent the skimmer from plugging with ice.

Reference

Jarrett, A. R. Proper Sizing of the Control Orifice for the Faircloth Skimmer. Pennsylvania State University Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Fact Sheet #252. http://www.age.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/f/F252.pdf

Jarrett, A. R. Controlling the Dewatering of Sedimentation Basins. Pennsylvania State University Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering Fact Sheet #253. http://www.age.psu.edu/extension/factsheets/f/F253.pdf

Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Manual, March, 2000. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection, Office of Water Management, Document #363-2134-008. http://www.co.centre.pa.us/conservation/esmanual.pdf.

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A Manual for Designing, Installing and Maintaining Skimmer Sediment Basins. February, 1999. J. W. Faircloth & Son.

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