



Delaware Program Improves Construction Site Inspection

Erosion and Sediment Control (ESC) practices require vigilance and frequent maintenance. Unfortunately, most ESC programs do not have the resources to effectively inspect construction activity. Responses from the Center's survey of 80 ESC programs indicate that each field inspector is responsible for an average of at least 150 sites per year. At this rate, inspectors are overburdened even if all the sites are not under active construction at the same time. If sediment controls are only 60 to 70% effective under good conditions, how can we expect protect streams without sufficient staff to ensure that ESC practices are applied properly?

One solution to this problem is to place part of the burden for inspection on the development community. A program in Delaware requires some developers to hire their own inspectors (Shaver and Piorko, 1996). Although these inspectors are officially called the construction reviewers, they are referred to as "private inspectors" in this article to avoid confusion with plan reviewers. The article describes when private inspectors are required, responsibilities under this program, other programs that can supplement it and some important safeguards. Finally, it provides some guidelines on developing a similar program.

Table 1: Site Required to Hire a Private Inspector

- All sites with greater than 50 acres of disturbed area
- Any site, as determined by the resource agency
- Sites under construction that present significant management problems

Table 2: Responsibilities Under the Private Inspector Program

Inspector Responsibility

- Certification and periodic re-certification (passing a training course)
- Making weekly inspection reports to the contractors and inspection agency
- On-site technical advice for contractors

Professional Engineer Responsibility

- Oversight and technical advice to the Private Inspector
- Usually works at the same firm as the Private Inspector

ESC Agency

- Training for Private Inspectors
- Review of all inspection reports
- "Spot Checks" on construction sites
- Enforcement action

Contractor/Developer Responsibility

- ESC maintenance and installation
- Hiring and Paying for Inspectors
- Feedback on site conditions, problems