New Products for Storm Water Erosion Control

by Johnny Combs

As the awareness of storm water compliance continues to grow both in the builder and the regulator worlds, the cost of compliance with the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) Construction Storm Water permit is receiving more attention.

The average cost for a residential lot to comply with the storm water permit ranges from $500 to $1,500 per house in Texas. Costs around the country go as high as $5,000 to $8,000 per house in states such as California.

The cost of the storm water program has spurred the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) to meet with the Environmental Protection Agency to find ways to curb the cost of compliance and relieve the financial burden, especially on small builders.

The 2005 Legislative Conference on April 13 at the start of NAHB's Spring Board Meeting in Washington, D.C., focused on the storm water compliance program and the Endangered Species Act, both of which have a major impact on the cost of developing and building residential properties.

To help reduce the cost and achieve better compliance, some new products have recently been announced on the market.

ERTEC Environmental Systems of Alameda, Calif. (www.ertecsystems.com) has just introduced the Sediment Control Log™, a reusable HDPE plastic jacket device that comes in five-foot lengths with a filter fabric attached to the HDPE jacket.

The log is interlocked and nailed in place with 60d nails. Some dirt is placed over the flap to keep runoff from undercutting the log. The jacket on the log is flexible and is made with a magic hinge which allows it to be bent thousands of times without breaking. This allows for a vehicle to drive over the log without damaging it — instead, it springs back to its original shape.

In low flow situations, wooden stakes can be placed on the downstream side to prevent the log from rolling over, thus providing effective sediment control. The cost is higher than a traditional silt fence, but its industrial construction and reusability make the overall cost lower than silt fencing, and it is more accommodating of vehicle traffic on and off the site.

The roll also can be used in front of storm drain inlets as an inlet protection device. The roll is held in place with gravel bags, which allows the roll to be easily removed for cleaning and replacement.

Recent heavy rains in California demonstrated that the rolled erosion control blankets for slope erosion protection performed better than any spray-on products or fiber rolls.

These blankets have been used extensively in Texas and continue to be a mainstay in the storm water compliance program. American Excelsior Company (www.amerexcel.com or www.curlex.com) makes Curlex, and SI Geosolutions (www.sigeosolutions.com) makes GEOTEX.

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