



Description and Purpose

Soil Preparation/Roughening involves assessment and preparation of surface soils for BMP installation. This can include soil testing (for seed base, soil characteristics, or nutrients), as well as roughening surface soils by mechanical methods (including sheepsfoot rolling, track walking, scarifying, stair stepping, and imprinting) to prepare soil for additional BMPs, or to break up sheet flow. Soil Preparation can also involve tilling topsoil to prepare a seed bed and/or incorporation of soil amendments, to enhance vegetative establishment. In post-fire recovery areas, soil roughening is used to break up water repellent soil layers (hydrophobic soil).

Suitable Applications

Soil preparation: Soil preparation is essential to proper vegetative establishment. In particular, soil preparation (i.e. tilling, raking, and amendment) is suitable for use in combination with any soil stabilization method, including Rolled Erosion Control Products (RECPs) or sod. Soil preparation should not be confused with roughening.

Roughening: Soil roughening is generally referred to as track walking (sometimes called imprinting) a slope, where treads from heavy equipment run parallel to the contours of the slope and act as mini terraces. Soil preparation is most effective when used in combination with erosion controls. Soil Roughening is suitable for use as a complementary process for controlling erosion on a site. Roughening is not intended to be used as a stand-alone BMP, and should be used with perimeter controls, additional erosion control measures, grade breaks, and vegetative establishment for maximum effectiveness. Roughening is intended to only affect surface soils and should not compromise slope stability or overall compaction. Suitable applications for soil roughening include:

Categories

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

- EC-3 Hydraulic Mulch
- EC-5 Soil Binders
- EC-7 Geotextiles and Mats



- Along any disturbed slopes, including temporary stockpiles, sediment basins, or compacted soil diversion berms and swales.
- In burned areas, to break up water repellant soil layers (hydrophobic soils) as well as prepare soil for seeding.
- Roughening should be used in combination with hydraulically applied stabilization methods, compost blanket, or straw mulch; but should not be used in combination with RECPs or sod because roughening is intended to leave terraces on the slope.

Testing for Hydrophobic Soils

1. Place a drop of water on the exposed soil surface and wait a few moments. If the water beads up and does not penetrate the soil then it is hydrophobic.
2. Repeat this test several times, but each time remove a one-inch thick layer of the soil profile. Breaking this water repellant layer is essential for successful reestablishment of plants.

Limitations

- Preparation and roughening must take place prior to installing other erosion controls (such as hydraulically applied stabilizers) or sediment controls (such as fiber rolls) on the faces of slopes.
- In such cases where slope preparation is minimal, erosion control/revegetation BMPs that do not require extensive soil preparation - such as hydraulic mulching and seeding applications - should be employed.
- Consideration should be given to the type of erosion control BMP that follows surface preparation, as some BMPs are not designed to be installed over various types of tillage/roughening, i.e., RECPs should not be used with soil roughening due to a “bridging” effect, which suspends the blanket above the seed bed.
- Surface roughness has an effect on the amount of mulch material that needs to be applied, which shows up as a general increase in mulch material due to an increase in surface area (Topographic Index -see EC-3 Hydraulic Mulch).

Implementation

- Additional guidance on the comparison and selection of temporary slope stabilization methods is provided in Appendix F of the Handbook.

General

A roughened surface can significantly reduce erosion. Based on tests done at the San Diego State Erosion Research Laboratory, various roughening techniques on slopes can result in a 12 - 76% reduction in the erosion rate versus smooth slopes.

Materials

Minimal materials are required unless amendments and/or seed are added to the soil. The majority of soil roughening/preparation can be done with equipment that is on hand at a normal construction site, such as bull dozers and compaction equipment.

Installation Guidelines

Soil Preparation

- Where appropriate or feasible, soil should be prepared to receive the seed by disking or otherwise scarifying the surface to eliminate crust, improve air and water infiltration and create a more favorable environment for germination and growth.
- Based upon soil testing conducted, apply additional soil amendments (e.g., fertilizers, additional seed) to the soil to help with germination. Follow EC-4, Hydroseeding, when selecting and applying seed and fertilizers.

Cut Slope Roughening:

- Stair-step grade or groove the cut slopes that are steeper than 3:1.
- Use stair-step grading on any erodible material soft enough to be ripped with a bulldozer. Slopes consisting of soft rock with some subsoil are particularly suited to stair-step grading.
- Make the vertical cut distance less than the horizontal distance, and slightly slope the horizontal position of the "step" in toward the vertical wall.
- Do not make individual vertical cuts more than 2 ft. (0.6 m) high in soft materials or more than 3 ft. (0.9 m) high in rocky materials.
- Groove the slope using machinery to create a series of ridges and depressions that run across the slope, on the contour.

Fill Slope Roughening:

- Place on fill slopes with a gradient steeper than 3:1 in lifts not to exceed 8 in. (0.2 m), and make sure each lift is properly compacted.
- Ensure that the face of the slope consists of loose, uncompacted fill 4-6 in. (0.1-0.2 m) deep.
- Use grooving or tracking to roughen the face of the slopes, if necessary.
- Do not blade or scrape the final slope face.

Roughening for Slopes to be Mowed:

- Slopes that require mowing activities should not be steeper than 3:1.
- Roughen these areas to shallow grooves by track walking, scarifying, sheepsfoot rolling, or imprinting.
- Make grooves close together (less than 10 in.), and not less than 1 in. deep, and perpendicular to the direction of runoff (i.e., parallel to the slope contours).
- Excessive roughness is undesirable where mowing is planned.

Roughening with Tracked Machinery:

- Limit roughening with tracked machinery to soils with a sandy textural component to avoid undue compaction of the soil surface.

- Operate tracked machinery up and down the slope to leave horizontal depressions in the soil. Do not back-blade during the final grading operation.
- Seed and mulch roughened areas as soon as possible to obtain optimum seed germination and growth.

Costs

Costs are based on the additional labor of tracking or preparation of the slope plus the cost of any required soil amendment materials.

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.
- Check the seeded slopes for signs of erosion such as rills and gullies. Fill these areas slightly above the original grade, then reseed and mulch as soon as possible.
- Inspect BMPs weekly during normal operations, prior to forecasted rain events, daily during extended rain events, and after the conclusion of rain events.