



Source: Caltrans Construction Site Best Management Practices Manual, 2003.

Description

Application of loose bulk material to stabilize disturbed soil by protecting bare soil, increasing infiltration, and reducing runoff. Materials used for mulching include green material, hydraulic matrices, hydraulic mulches of recycled paper or wood fiber, stone and aggregate, vegetable fibers (hay or straw), and wood/bark chips.

Applications

- Temporary ground cover until permanent vegetation has been established.
- Method used in combination with temporary or permanent seeding to enhance plant growth.
- Areas requiring soil moisture retention to prevent cracking of the soil.
- Ground cover for exposed soil between trees or shrubs.

Installation and Implementation Requirements

VEGETABLE FIBERS (HAY OR STRAW)

- Loose hay or straw which may be used in combination with seeding. Mulching usually follows seeding and the process is described in the following:
 - Apply seed and fertilizer to bare soil;
 - Apply loose hay or straw over top of seed and fertilizer prior to seed germination. Apply at a rate of 2,000 pounds per acre by machine or hand distribution;
 - Evenly distribute mulch on the soil surface to cover 80% to 90% of the ground;
 - Maintain maximum fiber length. Average fiber length shall be greater than 6 inches;

Installation and Implementation Requirements (Continued)

- Use a tackifier, netting, or mechanical “punching” method to anchor mulch. Method depends on slope steepness, accessibility, soil conditions, and longevity; and
- “Punching” straw or hay into soil is the preferred method of anchoring mulch for the following conditions:
 - Use a spade or shovel on small areas,
 - Use a knife-blade roller or straight bladed coulter (“crimper”) on slopes with soil, which can support construction equipment without undesirable compaction or instability,
 - Use plastic netting or jute on small areas and/or steep slopes. Geotextile pins, wooden stakes, or 11 gauge wire staples shall secure netting in place. This condition warrants consideration of the use of matting rather than mulch, and
 - Use tackifiers on steep slopes unable to support construction equipment or large application areas where use of nettings, straw, or hay is not cost-effective. Tackifiers glue vegetable fibers together and to the soil surface until the establishment of permanent vegetation.

GREEN MATERIAL

- Consists of recycled vegetation trimmings such as grass and shredded shrubs and trees.
- Generally applied by hand.
- Temporary ground cover with or without seeding.
- Evenly distribute green material on soil surface. Depth shall not exceed 4 inches.
- Anchor with a tackifier or netting on steep slopes or for areas with anticipated overland sheet flow. This condition warrants consideration of the use of matting rather than mulch.

WOOD/BARK CHIPS

- Suitable for areas which will not be mowed such as around trees, shrubs, and landscape plantings.
- Test soils prior to application. Add a minimum of 12 pounds of nitrogen per ton of mulch to counteract the effect of decomposing wood-based materials, which extract nitrogen from soil. Use a balanced, slow-release fertilizer or an organic source such as compost.
- Apply mulch by hand.
- Evenly distribute wood/bark chips on soil surface and maintain a mulch depth of 2-inch to tree basins and 4-inch to shrub beds.

HYDRAULIC MULCHES OF RECYCLED PAPER

- Consists of recycled newsprint, magazines, and other waste paper sources.
- May be applied with or without tackifiers.

Installation and Implementation Requirements (Continued)

- Hydraulic mulch materials shall conform to *2005 Hawaii Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction*.
- Mix mulch in a hydraulic application machine (hydroseeder) and apply as a liquid slurry.
- May be sprayed from a cannon up to 200 feet or from a hose up to 1,500 feet away from the application area.
- Mix mulch with seed and fertilizer as specified by the manufacturer. Apply mulch at the manufacturer's recommended rate to ensure uniform, effective coverage.

HYDRAULIC MULCHES OF WOOD FIBER

- Consists of wood waste from lumber mills or urban sources.
- May be manufactured with or without a tackifier.
- Hydraulic mulch shall conform to *2005 Hawaii Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction* or comply with the following requirements:
 - 100% wood fiber;
 - Maximum moisture content (total weight basis) shall not exceed 12% \pm 3%;
 - Minimum organic matter content (oven dry weight basis) of 99.3%;
 - Maximum inorganic matter (ash) content (oven dried basis) of 0.7%;
 - pH of 4.9 \pm 10% for a 3% water slurry; and
 - Minimum water holding capacity (oven dried basis) of 1.2 gallons per pound of fiber.
- Mix mulch in a hydraulic application machine (hydroseeder) and apply as a liquid slurry.
- Mix mulch with seed and fertilizer as specified by the manufacturer. Apply mulch at the manufacturer's recommended rate to ensure uniform, effective coverage.

HYDRAULIC MATRICES

- Hydraulic slurries consisting of wood fiber, paper fiber, or a combination of wood and paper fiber mixed with a binder system.
- Exceeds erosion control performance of blankets due to close contact with soil.
- Apply as an aqueous slurry (with seed) using standard hydroseeding equipment.
- Applications rates vary for different combinations of conditions and products.
- A typical mixture based on one acre of treated area includes the following:
 - 500 pounds wood fiber mulch;
 - 1,000 pounds recycled paper mulch; and

Installation and Implementation Requirements (Continued)

- 55 gallons acrylic copolymer with a minimum solids content of 55%.
- Bonded Fiber Matrix (BFM) consists of premixed fiber and binders.
 - After application and upon drying, BFM shall adhere to soil and form a 100% cover. The cover shall be biodegradable, promote vegetation, and prevent soil erosion.
 - Composed of long strand, thermally produced wood fibers (>88% of total volume by weight), held together by organic tackifiers (10%) and mineral bonding agents (<2%), which become insoluble and non-dispersible upon drying. Composition of BFM varies based on supplier.
 - Perform a free liquid quality control test on the liquid slurry.
 - Binder shall not dissolve or disperse upon watering.
 - Upon application to the soil, holes in the matrix shall not exceed 0.04 inches in size.
 - There shall not be any gaps between the matrix and the soil.
 - Minimum water holding capacity of the matrix shall be 1.2 gallons per pound matrix.
 - The matrix shall be free of germination or growth inhibiting factors and shall not form a water resistant crust.
 - Materials used for the matrix shall be 100% biodegradable and 100% beneficial to plant growth.
 - Testing and evaluation of the matrix by an independent research laboratory shall have been conducted to verify reported erosion control performance.
 - A trained and manufacturer certified applicator with knowledge of proper mixing and product application shall install the BFM.
 - Typical BFM application rates range from 3,000 to 8,000 pounds per acre per recommendations from various manufacturers.
 - BFM shall not be applied immediately before, during, or after a rainfall event to ensure a drying time of 24 hours after installation.
- Mulch used as temporary ground cover shall be reapplied to bare areas until permanent vegetation has been established.
- Avoid spraying mulch onto sidewalk, lined drainage channels, travelway, and existing vegetation.

Limitations

VEGETABLE FIBERS (HAY OR STRAW)

- Require three-step machinery.
- Labor intensive installation.
- Weed seeds and undesirable plant material may be introduced to sensitive areas.

Limitations (Continued)

- For applications using straw blowers, the applicable area must be located within 150 feet of a road or surface capable of supporting loads from large vehicles. If both hay and straw are available, it is preferable to use straw.

GREEN MATERIAL

- Limited commercial availability.
- Variable quality.
- Weeds or undesirable plant material may be introduced to the mulched area.
- Application primarily uses manual labor.
- Unpredictable effectiveness as an erosion control measure. Requires overspray with a tackifying agent to increase effectiveness.
- Application of fertilizer may be required.
- Limit use to non-critical steep slopes and areas where alternative erosion control measures may be readily applied.

WOOD/BARK CHIPS

- Poor erosion control effectiveness.
- Anchoring of chips onto steep slopes is difficult due to potential movement from high winds.
- Subject to displacement from concentrated flows.
- Use of a fertilizer with high nitrogen content is required to prevent nutrient deficiency in plants due to decomposing wood-based materials, which extract nitrogen from soil. Improper fertilizer use may contribute to water quality pollution.
- Limit use to non-critical steep slopes and areas where alternative erosion control measures may be readily applied.

HYDRAULIC MULCHES OF RECYCLED PAPER

- Limited erosion control effectiveness due to short fiber length and absence of a tackifier.
- Limited moisture and soil temperature moderation.
- Residual inks within mulches may be undesirable in environmentally sensitive areas.
- Significant decrease in longevity compared with wood fiber mulch.
- Difficulty budgeting for this product due to volatile prices for recycled paper products.

HYDRAULIC MULCHES OF WOOD FIBER

- Limited erosion control effectiveness.
- Short-term use of one growing season.

Mulching

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**Limitations
(Continued)**

HYDRAULIC MATRICES

- Avoid application of mulch immediately before, during, or after a rainfall event.
- Requires drying time of 24 hours.

**Inspections and
Maintenance**

- Mulches applied to seeded areas may be disturbed due to wind or runoff. Recover exposed areas until permanent vegetation has been established.
- Mulches applied to areas, which will be regraded and revegetated, shall be inspected weekly.
- Replace ornamental and landscape mulches of bark or wood chips if soil is visible in more than 75% of the designated area.