Standard Operation Procedures
for
Inspection and Maintenance

Sand Filter Basins
(SFs)

July 2019

SF-1 BACKGROUND

Sand Filter Basins (SFs) are a common type of Stormwater Management facility utilized within the Front Range of Colorado. A SF consists of a sedimentation chamber, a flat surfaced area of sand (sometimes covered with grass or sod), a filtration chamber, and a flat sand filter bed with an underdrain system. A surcharge zone exists within the sedimentation and filtration chambers for temporary storage of the Water Quality Capture Volume (WQCV). During a storm, runoff enters the sedimentation chamber, where the majority of sediments are deposited. The runoff then enters the filtration chamber where it ponds above the sand bed and gradually infiltrates into the underlying sand filter, filling the void spaces of the sand. The underdrain gradually dewaters the sand bed and discharges the runoff to a nearby channel, swale, or storm sewer. SFs provide for filtering and absorption of pollutants in the stormwater[1]. The popularity of SFs has grown because they allow the WQCV to be provided on a site that has little open area available for stormwater management. However, there are limitations on their use due to potential clogging from large amounts of sediment.

SF-2 INSPECTING SAND FILTER BASINS (SFs)

SF-2.1 Access and Easements

Inspection and maintenance personnel may utilize the stormwater facility map located in Appendix G containing the locations of the access points and maintenance easements of the SFs within this development.

SF-2.2 Stormwater Management Facilities Locations

Inspection and maintenance personnel may utilize the stormwater facility map located in Appendix G containing the locations of the SFs within this development.

SF-2.3 Sand Filter Extended Detention Basin (SF) Features

SFs have a number of features that are designed to serve a particular function. Many times the proper function of one feature depends on another. It is important for maintenance personnel to understand the function of each of these features to prevent damage to any feature during maintenance operations. Below is a list and description of the most common features within a SF and the corresponding maintenance inspection items that can be anticipated:

[1] Design of Stormwater Filtering Systems, Centers for Watershed Protection, December 1996

TABLE SF-1
Typical Inspection & Maintenance Requirements Matrix

	Sediment Removal	Mowing Weed control	Trash/ Debris Removal	Erosion	Overgrown Vegetation Removal	Removal/ Replacement	Structure Repair
Inflow Points/Splitter Box	X		X				X
Sedimentation Chamber	X	X	X	X	X		
Filter Media	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Underdrain System						X	
Overflow Outlet Works	X		X				X
Embankment		X	X	X	X		

SF-2.3.1 Inflow Points/Splitter Box

Inflow points or outfalls into SFs are the point of stormwater discharge into the facility. An inflow point is commonly a curb cut with a concrete or riprap rundown or a storm sewer pipe outfall with a flared end section.

SFs are designed to treat only the WQCV. The WQCV is a volume of water that runs off a site during an 80th percentile event. Any amount over the WQCV is allowed to go to a detention facility without water quality treatment. The splitter box is generally constructed of reinforced concrete. The splitter box typically has a lower wall that has a height that will trap the required WQCV. Volumes over the WQCV are allowed to spill over the wall and enter a storm sewer system that conveys the runoff to a detention facility. Proper inspection and maintenance of the splitter box is essential in ensuring the long-term operation of the SF.

An energy dissipater is typically immediately downstream of the splitter box, at the discharge point into the SF, to protect the sedimentation and filtration chambers from erosion. In some cases, the splitter box outfall can have a toe-wall or cut-off wall immediately below the structure to prevent undercutting of the outfall from erosion.

The typical maintenance activities that are required at inflow points are as follows:

a. Riprap Displaced – Many times, because of the repeated impact/force of water, the riprap can shift and settle. If any portion of the riprap apron appears to have settled, soil is present between the riprap, or the riprap

has shifted, maintenance may be required to ensure future erosion is prevented.

b. Sediment Accumulation – Because of the turbulence in the water created by the energy dissipater, sediment often deposits immediately downstream of the inflow point. To prevent a loss in performance of the upstream infrastructure, sediment that accumulates in this area must be removed on a timely basis.

c. Structural Damage – Structural damage can occur at anytime during the life of the facility. Typically for an inflow, the structural damage occurs to the pipe flared end section (concrete or steel). Structural damage can lead to additional operating problems with the facility, including loss of hydraulic performance.

SF-2.3.2 Sedimentation Chamber

The sedimentation chamber is located adjacent to the splitter box and generally consists of a flat irrigated turf grass area followed by a water trapping device that allows water to be briefly held in the sedimentation chamber before being released into the filtration chamber. This slowing of the runoff allows sediments to be deposited in the sedimentation chamber and not the filtration chamber where they can cause clogging of the filter media.

The typical maintenance activities that are required within the sedimentation chamber are as follows:

a. Mowing/woody growth control/weeds present - Routine mowing of the turf grass within the sediment chamber is necessary to improve the overall appearance and to ensure proper function of the SF. Turf grass should be mowed to a height of 2 to 4- inches and shall be bagged to prevent potential contamination of the filter media. If undesirable vegetation is not routinely mowed/removed, the growth can cause debris/sediment to accumulate, resulting in blockage of the filter media. Also, shrub, grass and weed roots can cause damage to the filter media and underdrain system. Routine management is essential to prevent more extensive and costly future maintenance.

SBF-2.3.3 Filter Media

The filter media is the main pollutant removal component of the SF. The filter media consists of 18-inches of washed sand. The filter media removes pollutants through several different processes, including sedimentation, filtration, infiltration and microbial uptake.

Sedimentation is accomplished by the slow release of stormwater runoff through the filter media. This slow release allows for sediment particles that were not deposited in the sedimentation chamber to be deposited on the top layer of the filter media where they are easily removed through routine maintenance. Other pollutants are also removed through this process because they are attached to sediment.

Filtration is the main pollutant removal mechanism of SFs. When the stormwater runoff migrates down through the filter media, many of the particulate pollutants are physically strained out as they pass through the filter bed of sand and are trapped on the surface or among the pores of the filter media.

SFs that are not lined with an impervious liner allow for infiltration into the native soils. This process also allows for additional pollutant removal.

Microbes that naturally occur in the filter media can assist with pollutant removal by breaking down organic pollutants.

The typical maintenance activities that are required within the filter media areas are as follows:

a. Mowing/woody growth control/weeds present - Noxious weeds and other unwanted vegetation must be treated as needed throughout the SF. This activity can be performed either through mechanical means (mowing/pulling) or with herbicide. Consultation with a local Weed Inspector is highly recommended prior to the use of herbicide. Herbicides should be utilized sparingly and as a last resort. All herbicide applications should be in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

b. Sediment/Pollutant Removal – Although SFs should not be utilized in areas where large concentrations of sediment and other pollutants will enter the SF, it is inevitable that some sediment and other pollutants will enter the SF. Most sediment will be deposited in the sedimentation chamber, however finer suspended particles will migrate to the filter media. These sediments need to be removed to ensure proper infiltration rates of the stormwater runoff.

c. Filter Replacement - The top layers of the filter media are the most susceptible to pollutant loading and therefore may need to be removed and disposed of properly on a semi-regular basis when infiltration rates slow.

d. Infiltration Rate Test - An infiltration test may be necessary to ensure proper functioning of the filter media. The infiltration test can be conducted by filling the sand filter with water to the elevation of the overflow wall in

the splitter box. The sand filter needs to drain completely within 24-hours of the filling. If the drain time for the basin is longer than 24-hours, the filter is in need of maintenance.

SF-2.3.4 Underdrain System

The underdrain system consists of a layer of geotextile fabric, gravel storage area and perforated PVC pipes. The geotextile fabric is utilized to prevent the filter media from entering the underdrain system. The gravel storage area allows for storage of treated stormwater runoff prior to the discharge of the runoff through the perforated PVC pipe.

The typical maintenance activities that are required for the underdrain system are as follows:

With proper maintenance of the filter media and sediment chamber, there should be a minimum amount of maintenance required on the underdrain system. Generally, the only maintenance performed on the underdrain system is jet-vac cleaning.

SF-2.3.5 Overflow Outlet Works

Some SFs include an overflow outlet works in place of the splitter box. The overflow outlet works allows runoff amounts that exceed the WQCV to exit the SF to the detention facility. The outlet works is typically constructed of reinforced concrete into the embankment of the SF. The concrete structure typically has steel orifice plates anchored/embedded into it to control stormwater release rates. The larger openings (flood control) on the outlet structure typically have trash racks over them to prevent clogging. Proper inspection and maintenance of the outlet works is essential in ensuring the long-term operation of the SF.

The typical maintenance activities that are required for the overflow outlet works are as follows:

a. Structural Damage - The overflow outlet structure is primarily constructed of concrete, which can crack, spall, and settle. The steel grate on the overflow outlet structure is also susceptible to damage.

b. Mowing/woody growth control/weeds present – The presence of plant material not part of the original landscaping, such as wetland plants or other woody growth, can clog the overflow outlet works during a larger storm event, causing flooding damage to adjacent areas. This plant material may indicate a clogging of the filter media and may require additional investigation.

SF-2.3.6 Embankments

Some SFs utilize irrigated turf grass embankments to store the WQCV.

The typical maintenance activities that are required for the embankments areas are as follows:

a. Vegetation Sparse – The embankments are one of the most visible parts of the SF and, therefore, aesthetics is important. Adequate and properly maintained vegetation can greatly increase the overall appearance of the SF. Also, vegetation can reduce the potential for erosion and subsequent sediment transport to the filter media, thereby reducing the need for more costly maintenance.

b. Erosion – Inadequate vegetative cover may result in erosion of the embankments. Erosion that occurs on the embankments can cause clogging of the filter media.

c. Trash/Debris – Trash and debris can accumulate in the upper area after large events, or from illegal dumping. Over time, this material can clog the SF filter media and outlet works.

d. Mowing/woody growth control/weeds present – The presence of plant material not part of the original landscaping, such as wetland plants or other woody growth, can result in difficulty in performing maintenance activities. These trees and shrubs may also damage the underdrain system of the SF. This plant material may indicate a clogging of the filter media and may require additional investigation.

SF-2.3.7 Emergency Overflow

An emergency spillway is typical of all SFs and designed to serve as the overflow in the event the volume of the pond is exceeded. The emergency spillway is typically armored with riprap (or other hard armor), and is sometimes buried with soil or may be a concrete wall or other structure. The emergency spillway is typically a weir (notch) in the basin embankment. Proper function of the emergency spillway is essential to ensure flooding does not affect adjacent properties.

The typical maintenance activities that are required for the emergency overflow areas are as follows:

a. Riprap Displaced – As mentioned before, the emergency spillway is typically armored with riprap to provide erosion protection. Over the life of an SF, the riprap may shift or become dislodged due to flow.

b. Erosion Present – Although the spillway is typically armored, stormwater flowing through the spillway can cause erosion damage. Erosion must be repaired to ensure the integrity of the basin embankment, and proper function of the spillway.

c. Mowing/weed/woody growth control – Management of woody vegetation is essential in the proper long-term function of the spillway. Larger trees or dense shrubs can capture larger debris entering the SF and reduce the capacity of the spillway. These trees and shrubs may also damage the underdrain system of the SF.

d. Obstruction/Debris – The spillway must be cleared of any obstruction (man made or natural) to ensure the proper design capacity.

SF-2.3.8 Miscellaneous

There are a variety of inspection/maintenance issues that may not be attributed to a single feature within the SF. This category on the inspection form is for maintenance items that are commonly found in the SF, but may not be attributed to an individual feature.

a. Encroachment in Easement Area – Private lots/property can sometimes be located very close to the SFs, even though they are required to be located in tracts with drainage easements. Property owners may place landscaping, trash, fencing, or other items within the easement area that may affect maintenance or the operation of the facility.

b. Graffiti/Vandalism – Vandals can cause damage to the SF infrastructure. If criminal mischief is evident, the inspector should forward this information to the local Sheriff's Office

c. Public Hazards – Public hazards include items such as vertical drops of greater than 4-feet, containers of unknown/suspicious substances, and exposed metal/jagged concrete on structures. **If any hazard is found within the facility area that poses an immediate threat to public safety, contact the local Sheriff's Office at 911 immediately.**

d. Other – Any miscellaneous inspection/maintenance items not contained on the form should be entered here.

SF-3 MAINTAINING SAND FILTER BASINS (SFs)

SF-3.1 Maintenance Personnel

Maintenance personnel must be qualified to properly maintain SFs. Inadequately trained personnel can cause additional problems resulting in additional maintenance costs.

SF-3.2 Equipment

It is imperative that the appropriate equipment and tools are taken to the field with the operations crew. The types of equipment/tools will vary depending on the task at hand. Below is a list of tools, equipment, and material(s) that may be necessary to perform maintenance on a SF:

1.) Mowing Tractors
2.) Trimmers (extra string)
3.) Shovels
4.) Rakes
5.) All Surface Vehicle (ASVs)
6.) Skid Steer
7.) Back Hoe
8.) Track Hoe/Long Reach Excavator
9.) Dump Truck
10.) Jet-Vac Machine
11.) Engineers Level (laser)
12.) Riprap (Minimum - Type M)
13.) Geotextile Fabric
14.) Erosion Control Blanket(s)
15.) Sod
16.) Illicit Discharge Cleanup Kits
17.) Trash Bags
18.) Tools (wrenches, screw drivers, hammers, etc)
19.) Confined Space Entry Equipment
20.) Approved Stormwater Facility Operation and Maintenance Manual
21.) ASTM C-33 Sand

Some of the items identified above may not be needed for every maintenance operation. However, this equipment should be available to the maintenance operations crews should the need arise.

SF-3.3 Safety

Vertical drops may be encountered in areas located within and around the SF. Avoid walking on top of retaining walls or other structures that have a significant vertical drop. If a vertical drop is identified within the pond that is

greater than 48-inches in height, make the appropriate note/comment on the maintenance inspection form.

SF-3.4 SF Maintenance Categories and Activities

A typical SF Maintenance Program will consist of three broad categories of work: Routine, Minor and Major. Within each category of work, a variety of maintenance activities can be performed on a SF. A maintenance activity can be specific to each feature within the SF, or general to the overall facility. This section of the SOP explains each of the categories and briefly describes the typical maintenance activities for a SF.

A variety of maintenance activities are typical of SFs. The maintenance activities range in magnitude from routine trash pickup to the reconstruction of the SF filter media or underdrain system. Below is a description of each maintenance activity, the objectives, and frequency of actions:

SF-3.5 Routine Maintenance Activities

The majority of this work consists of scheduled mowings, trash and debris pickups for the SF during the growing season. It also includes activities such as weed control. These activities normally will be performed numerous times during the year. These items typically do not require any prior correspondence with SEMSWA, however, completed inspection and maintenance forms shall be submitted to SEMSWA for each inspection and maintenance.

The Routine Maintenance Activities are summarized below, and further described in the following sections.

TABLE SF-2
Summary of Routine Maintenance Activities

Maintenance Activity	Minimum Frequency	Look for:	Maintenance Action
Mowing	Twice annually	Excessive grass height/aesthetics	2”-4” grass height
Trash/Debris Removal	Twice annually	Trash/debris in SF	Remove and dispose of trash and debris
Splitter Box/Overflow Outlet Works Cleaning	As needed - after significant rain events – twice annually minimum	Clogged outlet structure; ponding water	Remove and dispose of debris/trash/sediment to allow outlet to function properly

Woody growth control /Weed removal	Minimum twice annually	Noxious weeds; Unwanted vegetation	Treat w/herbicide or hand pull; consult a local Weed Inspector

SF-3.5.1 Mowing

Routine mowing of the turf grass embankments and turf grass located in the sedimentation chamber is necessary to improve the overall appearance of the SF and ensure proper performance of the sediment chamber. Turf grass should be mowed to a height of 2 to 4-inches and shall be bagged to prevent potential contamination of the filter media.

Frequency – Routine - Minimum of twice annually or depending on aesthetics.

SF-3.5.2 Trash/Debris Removal

Trash and debris must be removed from the entire SF area to minimize outlet clogging and to improve aesthetics. This activity must be performed prior to mowing operations.

Frequency – Routine – Prior to mowing operations and minimum of twice annually.

SF-3.5.3 Splitter Box/Overflow Outlet Works Cleaning

Debris and other materials can clog the splitter box/overflow outlet work's grate. This activity must be performed anytime other maintenance activities are conducted to ensure proper operation.

Frequency - Routine – After significant rainfall event or concurrently with other maintenance activities.

SF- 3.5.4 Woody Growth Control/Weed Removal

Noxious weeds and other unwanted vegetation must be treated as needed throughout the SF. This activity can be performed either through mechanical means (mowing/pulling) or with herbicide. Consultation with a local County Weed Inspector is highly recommended prior to the use of herbicide. Herbicides should be utilized sparingly and as a last resort. All herbicide applications should be in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.

Frequency – Routine – As needed based on inspections.

SF-3.6 Minor Maintenance Activities

This work consists of a variety of isolated or small-scale maintenance/operational problems. Most of this work can be completed by a small crew, hand tools, and small equipment. These items require prior approval from SEMSWA. Completed inspection and maintenance forms shall be submitted to SEMSWA for each inspection and maintenance period. In the event that the SF needs to be dewatered, care should be given to ensure sediment, filter material and other pollutants are not discharged. All dewatering activities shall be coordinated with SEMSWA.

TABLE SF-3
Summary of Minor Maintenance Activities

Maintenance Activity	Minimum Frequency	Look for:	Maintenance Action
Sediment/Pollutant Removal	As needed; typically every 1 –2 years	Sediment build-up in sedimentation chamber and filter media; decrease in infiltration rate	Remove and dispose of sediment
Erosion Repair	As needed, based upon inspection	Rills/gullies on embankments or sedimentation in the forebay	Repair eroded areas & revegetate; address cause
Jet-Vac/Cleaning Underdrains	As needed, based upon inspection	Sediment build-up /non-draining system	Clean drains; Jet-Vac if needed

SF-3.6.1 Sediment Removal/Pollutant Removal

Sediment removal is necessary to ensure proper function of the filter media. The infiltration rate of the SF needs to be checked in order to ensure proper functioning of the SF. Generally, a SF should drain completely within 12-hours of a storm event. If drain times exceed the 12-hour drain time than maintenance of the filter media shall be required.

At a minimum, the top 3-inches of filter media should be removed at each removal period. Additional amounts of filter media may need to be removed if deeper sections of the filter media are contaminated. New filter media will need to be placed back into the SF when the total amount of sand removed reaches 9-inches. This may take multiple maintenance events to accomplish. It is critical that only sand that meets the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) C-33 standard be utilized in the replacement of the filter media.

ASTM C-33 Sand Standard

US Standard Sieve Size (Number)	Total Percent Passing (%)
9.5 mm (3/8 inch)	100
4.75 mm (No. 4)	95-100
2.36 mm (No. 8)	80-100
1.18 mm (No. 16)	50-85
600μm (No. 30)	25-60
300μm (No. 50)	10-30
150μm (No. 100)	2-10

Other types of sand and soil material may lead to clogging of the SF. The minor sediment removal activities can typically be addressed with shovels, rakes and smaller equipment. Major sediment removal activities will require larger and more specialized equipment. Extreme care should be taken when utilizing motorized or heavy equipment to ensure damage to the underdrain system does not occur. The major sediment removal activities will also require surveying with an engineer's level, and consultation with SEMSWA Engineering Staff to ensure design volumes/grades are achieved.

Stormwater sediments removed from SFs do not meet the regulatory definition of "hazardous waste". However, these sediments can be contaminated with a wide array of organic and inorganic pollutants and handling must be done with care to ensure proper removal and disposal. Sediments should be transported by motor vehicle only after they are dewatered. All sediments must be taken to a licensed landfill for proper disposal. Should a spill occur during transportation, prompt and thorough cleanup and disposal is imperative.

Frequency – Non-routine – As necessary, based upon inspections. Sediment removal in the sedimentation chamber may be necessary as frequently as every 1-2 years.

SF-3.6.2 Erosion Repair

The repair of eroded areas is necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the SF, to minimize sediment transport, and to reduce potential impacts to other features. Erosion can vary in magnitude from minor repairs to filter media and embankments, to rills, and gullies in the embankments and inflow points. The repair of eroded areas may require the use of excavators, earthmoving equipment, riprap, concrete, and sod. Extreme care should be taken when utilizing motorized or heavy equipment to ensure damage to the underdrain system does not occur. Major erosion repair to the pond embankments, spillways, and adjacent to structures will require consultation with SEMSWA Engineering Staff.

Frequency – Non-routine – As necessary, based upon inspections.

SF-3.6.3 Jet-Vac/Clearing Drains

A SF contains an underdrain system that allows treated stormwater runoff to exit the facility. These underdrain systems can develop blockages that can result in a decrease of hydraulic capacity and also create standing water. Many times the blockage to this infrastructure can be difficult to access and/or clean. Specialized equipment (jet-vac machines) may be necessary to clear debris from these difficult areas.

Frequency – Non-routine – As necessary, based upon inspections.

SF-3.7 Major Maintenance Activities

This work consists of larger maintenance/operational problems and failures within the stormwater management facilities. All of this work requires approval from SEMSWA Engineering to ensure the proper maintenance is performed. This work requires that Engineering Staff review the original design and construction drawings to assess the situation and assign the necessary maintenance activities. This work may also require more specialized maintenance equipment, design/details, surveying, or assistance through private contractors and consultants. In the event that the basin needs to be dewatered, care should be given to ensure sediment, filter material and other pollutants are not discharged. Consultation with SEMSWA is required prior to any dewatering activity.

TABLE SF-4
Summary of Major Maintenance Activities

Maintenance Activity	Minimum Frequency	Look for:	Maintenance Action

Major Sediment/Pollutant Removal	As needed – based upon scheduled inspections	Large quantities of sediment in the sedimentation chamber and/or filter media; reduced infiltration rate /capacity	Remove and dispose of sediment. Repair vegetation as needed
Major Erosion Repair	As needed – based upon scheduled inspections	Severe erosion including gullies, excessive soil displacement, areas of settlement, holes	Repair erosion – find cause of problem and address to avoid future erosion
Structural Repair	As needed – based upon scheduled inspections	Deterioration and/or damage to structural components – broken concrete, damaged pipes & outlet works	Structural repair to restore the structure to its original design
SF Rebuild	As needed – due to complete failure of SF	Removal of filter media and underdrain system	Contact SEMSWA Engineering

SF-3.7.1 Major Sediment/Pollutant Removal

In very rare cases the filter media of the SF may be contaminated so badly that the entire 18-inches of the filter media may need to be removed.

Major sediment/pollutant removal consists of removal of large quantities of sediment/filter media. Extreme care should be taken when utilizing motorized or heavy equipment to ensure damage to the underdrain system does not occur. The sediment/filter media needs to be carefully removed, transported and properly disposed. Vegetated areas need special care to ensure design volumes and grades are preserved or may need to be replaced due to the removal activities. Stormwater sediments removed from SFs do not meet the regulatory definition of “hazardous waste”. However, these sediments can be contaminated with a wide array of organic and inorganic pollutants and handling must be done with care to insure proper removal and disposal. Sediments should be transported by motor vehicle only after they are dewatered. All sediments must be taken to a licensed landfill for proper disposal. Should a spill occur during transportation, prompt and thorough cleanup and disposal is imperative.

Frequency – Non-routine – Repair as needed, based upon inspections.

SF-3.7.2 Major Erosion Repair

Major erosion repair consists of filling and revegetating areas of severe erosion. Determining the cause of the erosion as well as correcting the condition that caused the erosion should also be part of the erosion repair. Care should be given to ensure design grades and volumes are preserved. Extreme care should be taken when utilizing motorized or heavy equipment to ensure damage to the underdrain system does not occur.

Frequency – Non-routine – Repair as needed, based upon inspections.

SF-3.7.3 Structural Repair

A SF generally includes a splitter box or concrete overflow outlet structure that can deteriorate or be damaged during the service life of the facility. These structures are constructed of steel and concrete that can degrade or be damaged and may need to be repaired or re-constructed from time to time. Major repairs to structures may require input from a structural engineer and specialized contractors. Consultation with SEMSWA Engineering Staff shall take place prior to all structural repairs.

Frequency – Non-routine – Repair as needed, based upon inspections.

SF-3.7.4 SF Rebuild

In very rare cases a SF may need to be rebuilt. Generally, the need for a complete rebuild is a result of improper construction, improper maintenance resulting in structural damage to the underdrain system, or extensive contamination of the SF. Consultation with SEMSWA Engineering Staff shall take place prior to any rebuild project.

Frequency – Non-routine – As needed, based upon inspections.

Reference:

This Manual is adapted from the Douglas County, Colorado, Standard Operating Procedure for Extended Detention Basin (EDB) Inspection and Maintenance, July 2005