Dry Detention Pond

Practice Description

As the name of this BMP implies, these basins are typically dry between storm events. A low-flow outlet slowly releases water retained over a period of days. This BMP can be applied in residential, industrial, and commercial developments where sufficient space is available. The primary purpose of dry extended detention basins is to attenuate and delay stormwater runoff peaks. They are appropriate where water quality issues are secondary to managing peak runoff, since the overall pollutant removal efficiency of dry extended detention basins is low. Dry extended detention basins are not intended as infiltration or groundwater recharge measures

Planning Considerations

Dry detention ponds have traditionally been one of the most widely used stormwater best management practices. In some instances, these ponds may be the most appropriate best management practice. However, they should not be used as a “one size fits all: solution. If pollutant removal efficiency is an important consideration, dry detention ponds may not be the most appropriate choice. Dry detention ponds require a large amount of space to build. In many instances, smaller sized best management practices are more appropriate alternatives (see *Grassed Swales, Infiltration Basin, Infiltration Trench, Pervious Asphalt Pavement, Bioretention (Rain Gardens), Permeable Interlocking Concrete Paving,* or *Green Roofs*).

Design Criteria

Converting Sediment and Erosion Control Devices

Sediment basins that are used during construction can be converted into dry extended detention basins after the construction is completed. If used during construction as a sediment basin, the basin must be completely cleaned out, graded, and vegetated within 14 days of completion of construction.

Siting Considerations

Designers need to ensure that the dry detention pond is feasible at the site in question. This section provides basic guidelines for siting dry detention ponds.

Drainage Area

Dry extended detention basins can be utilized on very large sites, but often reach limitations around 25 acres or more. The most common limitation is the bottom of the basin approaching groundwater.

Slope

Dry detention ponds can be used on sites with slopes up to about 15 percent. The local slope needs to be relatively flat, however, to maintain reasonably flat side slopes in the practice. There is no minimum slope requirement, but there does need to be enough elevation drop from the pond inlet to the pond outlet to ensure that flow can move through the system.

Soils/Topography

Dry detention ponds can be used with almost all soils and geology, with minor design adjustments for regions of karst topography or in rapidly percolating soils such as sand. In these areas, extended detention ponds should be designed with an impermeable liner to prevent groundwater contamination or sinkhole formation.

Ground Water

Except for the case of hot spot runoff, the only consideration regarding groundwater is that the base of the extended detention facility should not intersect the groundwater table. A permanently wet bottom may become a mosquito breeding ground. Research in southwest Florida (Santana et al., 1994) demonstrated that intermittently flooded systems, such as dry extended detention ponds, produced more mosquitoes than other pond systems, particularly when the facilities remained wet for more than 3 days following heavy rainfall.

Design Considerations

Specific designs may vary considerably, depending on site constraints or preferences of the designer or community. Some features, however, should be incorporated into most dry extended detention pond designs. These design features can be divided into five basic categories: pretreatment, treatment, conveyance, maintenance reduction, and landscaping.

Pretreatment

A forebay is highly recommended at the inlet of a dry extended detention basin to trap incoming sediment if the design flow to the facility is over 10 acre-inches. A forebay is recommended on all other dry detention basins. With heavy, coarse sediment confined to the forebay area, maintenance is made simpler and less costly and the life of the BMP is extended.

To prevent resuspension of trapped sediment and scour during high flows, the energy of the influent flow must be controlled. This can be in the form of a forebay as mentioned above, a plunge pool, riprap, or other energy-dissipating and erosion-control measures.

Treatment

Treatment design features help enhance the ability of a stormwater management practice to remove pollutants. Designing dry ponds with a high length-to-width ratio (i.e., at least 1.5:1) and incorporating other design features to maximize the flow path effectively increases the detention time in the system by eliminating the potential of flow to short-circuit the pond. Designing ponds with relatively flat side slopes can also help to lengthen the effective flow path. Finally, the pond should be sized to detain the volume of runoff to be treated for between 12 and 48 hours.

Length, Width, Depth and Geometry

The volume of a dry extended detention basin is driven exclusively by the volume of stormwater that is required to be captured. Once that volume is calculated, the dimensional aspect of the basin is mostly site driven. Below are some dimensional and layout requirements:

- The maximum depth shall be 10 feet.
- A minimum of 1 foot of freeboard shall be provided between the design flow pool elevation and the emergency overflow invert.

- The minimum flow length-to-width ratio shall be 1.5:1, but 3:1 is recommended. The basin width should preferably expand as it approaches the outlet.

- Side slopes of the basin shall be no steeper than 3H:1V if stabilized by vegetation.

- In addition to detention volume, design must provide for sediment storage equal to 25 percent of detention volume. If it is known that the upstream drainage basin will contribute high sediment loads (e.g. construction) over several years, then additional sediment storage should be provided.

By causing turbulence and eddies in the flow, flow short-circuiting can interfere with the function of the basin outlet system and should therefore be minimized. The most direct way of minimizing short-circuiting is to maximize the distance between the riser and the inlet. Larger length-to-width ratios should be used if sedimentation of particulates during low flows is desirable. Irregularly shaped basins appear more natural. If a relatively long, narrow facility is not suitable at a given site, baffles constructed from gabions or other materials can be placed in the basin to lengthen the flowpath.

A sinuous low-flow channel should be constructed through the basin to transport dry-weather flows and minor storm flows. Preferably, the channel would be grass lined and sloped at approximately 2 percent to promote drainage of the basin between storms. The entire bottom of the basin should drain toward the low-flow channel.

Conveyance

Conveyance of stormwater runoff into and through the dry pond is a critical component. Stormwater should be conveyed to and from dry ponds safely in a manner that minimizes erosion potential. The outfall of pond systems should always be stabilized to prevent scour. To convey low flows through the system, designers should provide a pilot channel. A pilot channel is a surface channel that should be used to convey low flows through the pond. In addition, an emergency spillway should be provided to safely convey large flood events. To help mitigate the warming of water at the outlet channel, designers should provide shade around the channel at the pond outlet.

Outlet Design

In addition to meeting specific hydraulic requirements for runoff detention and peak attenuation, outlets also must be functionally simple and easy to maintain. Below are design requirements and guidelines for dry extended detention basin outlets:

- Basin design should include a small permanent pool near the outlet orifice to reduce clogging and keep floating debris away from the outlet.

- Basin design must include a drain that will completely empty the basin for clean-out.

- Durable materials such as reinforced concrete or plastic are preferable to corrugated metal in most instances.
- The riser should be placed in or at the face of the embankment to make maintenance easier and prevent flotation problems.
- Erosion protection measures should be used at the basin discharge point.
- To prevent piping and internal erosion problems around the spillway/outlet conduit through an embankment system, a filter diaphragm and drainage system is recommended.

Maintenance Reduction

Regular maintenance activities are needed to maintain the function of stormwater practices. In addition, some design features can be incorporated to ease the maintenance burden of each practice. In dry detention ponds, a "micropool" at the outlet can prevent resuspension of sediment and outlet clogging. A good design includes maintenance access to the forebay and micropool.

Another design feature that can reduce maintenance needs is a non-clogging outlet. Typical examples include a reverse-slope pipe or a weir outlet with a trash rack. A reverse slope pipe draws from below the permanent pool extending in a reverse angle up to the riser and determines the water elevation of the micropool. Because these outlets draw water from below the level of the permanent pool, they are less likely to be clogged by floating debris.

Landscaping

When choosing vegetation for a dry extended detention basin, consideration must be given to the wildflowers or grasses specified because of the frequent inundations, warm and cold seasons, as well as salt and oil loading. Additionally, the plants should not be fertilized except for a one-time application after seeding. Mowing should be minimal. It has been found that a wet meadow mix or Bermuda grass typically performs well in those locations with the climate able to support it.

The dry extended detention basin must be stabilized within 14 days after the end of construction. The stabilization might be the final vegetation or a temporary stabilization measure until the vegetation becomes established.

Design Variations

Tank Storage

Another variation of the dry detention pond design is the use of tank storage. In these designs, stormwater runoff is conveyed to large storage tanks or vaults underground. This practice is most often used in the ultra-urban environment on small sites where no other opportunity is available to provide flood control. Tank storage is provided on small areas because underground storage for a large drainage area would generally be costly. Because the drainage area contributing to tank storage is typically small, the outlet

diameter needed to reduce the flow from very small storms would very small. A very small outlet diameter, along with the underground location of the tanks, creates the potential for debris being caught in the outlet and resulting maintenance problems. Since it is necessary to control small runoff events (such as the runoff from a 1-inch storm) to improve water quality, it is generally infeasible to use tank storage for water quality and generally impractical to use it to protect stream channels.

Common Problems

Although dry detention ponds are widely applicable, they have some limitations that might make other stormwater management options preferable:

- Dry detention ponds have only moderate pollutant removal when compared to other structural stormwater practices, and they are ineffective at removing soluble pollutants.
- Dry extended detention ponds may become a nuisance due to mosquito breeding if improperly maintained or if shallow pools of water form for more than 7 days.
- Although wet ponds can increase property values, dry ponds can actually detract from the value of a home.
- Dry detention ponds on their own only provide peak flow reduction and do little to control overall runoff volume, which could result in adverse downstream impacts.

Maintenance

- The drainage area will be managed to reduce the sediment load to the dry extended detention basin.

- Immediately after the dry extended detention basin is established, the vegetation will be watered twice weekly, if needed, until the plants become established (commonly six weeks).

- No portion of the dry extended detention pond will be fertilized after the first initial fertilization that is required to establish the vegetation.

- The vegetation in and around the basin should be maintained at a height of approximately six inches.

- Once a year, a dam safety expert will inspect the embankment.