Wet Pond

Practice Description

Wet ponds (a.k.a. stormwater ponds, wet retention ponds, wet extended detention ponds) are constructed basins that have a permanent pool of water throughout the year (or at least throughout the wet season). In wet detention basins, a permanent pool of standing water is maintained by the riser—the elevated outlet of the wet detention basin. Water in the permanent pool mixes with and dilutes the initial runoff from storm events. Wet detention basins fill with stormwater and release most of the mixed flow over a period of a few days, slowly returning the basin to its normal depth.

Runoff generated during the early phases of a storm usually has the highest concentrations of sediment and dissolved pollutants. Because a wet detention basin dilutes and settles pollutants in the initial runoff, the concentration of pollutants in the runoff released downstream is reduced. Following storm events, pollutants are removed from water retained in the wet detention basin. Two mechanisms that remove pollutants in wet detention basins include settling of suspended particulates and biological uptake, or consumption of pollutants by plants, algae, and bacteria in the water. However, if the basin is not adequately maintained (e.g., by periodic excavation of the captured sediment), storm flows may re-suspend sediments and deliver them to the stream.

Planning Considerations

Wet detention basins are applicable in residential, industrial, and commercial developments where enough space is available. Wet detention basins are sized and configured to provide significant removal of pollutants from the incoming stormwater runoff. The permanent pool of water is designed for a target total suspended solids removal efficiency according to the size and imperviousness of the contributing watershed. Above this permanent pool of water, wet detention basins are also designed to hold the runoff volume required by the stormwater regulations, and to release it over a period of 2 to 5 days. As a result, most of the suspended sediment and pollutants attached to the sediment settle out of the water. In addition, water is slowly released so that downstream erosion from smaller storms is lessened.

Design Criteria

Converting Erosion- and Sediment-Control Devices

Wet detention basins are typically part of the initial site clearing and grading activities and are often used as sediment basins during construction of the upstream development. Volume 1 contains design requirements for sediment basins required during construction. A sediment basin typically does not include all the engineering features of a wet detention basin, and the design engineer must ensure that the wet detention basin includes all the features identified in this section, including the full sizing as a wet detention basin. If the wet detention basin is used as a sediment trap during construction, all sediment deposited during construction must be removed, erosion features must be repaired, and the vegetated shelf must be restored, before operation as a stormwater BMP begins.

Siting Considerations

Because large storage volumes are needed to achieve extended detention times, wet detention basins require larger land areas than many other BMPs. Wet detention basins may not be suitable for projects with very limited available land. Permanent retaining walls may be used to obtain the required design volumes while reducing the footprint that would otherwise be required for earthen construction. Retaining walls utilized to contain the permanent pool must not reduce the required 10′ width of the vegetated shelf, and must not extend to a top elevation above the lowest point of the vegetated shelf. Retaining walls utilized to contain the temporary pool must not reduce the required 10′ width of the vegetated shelf, and must not be in contact with the stormwater stored up to the temporary pool elevation. Two retaining walls may be used, as shown in Figure 1. Or, the design may be altered to contain only one of the two shown.

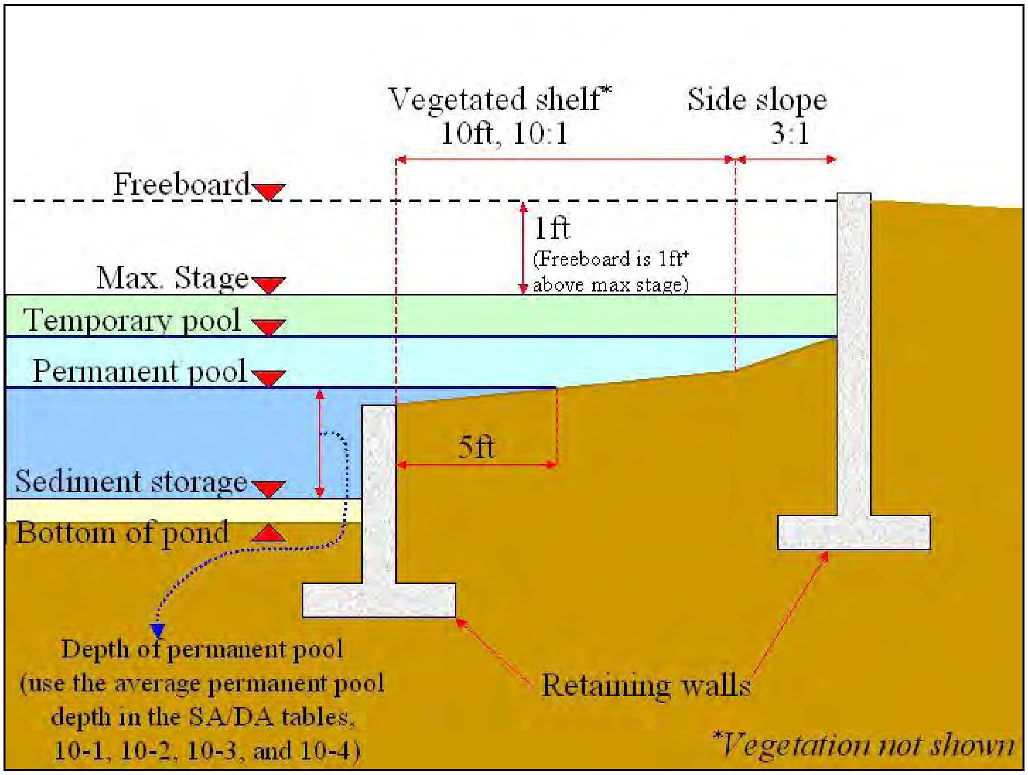


Figure 1 Alternative Wet Pond Design: Retaining Wall Option

Drainage Area

Wet ponds need sufficient drainage area to maintain the permanent pool. In humid regions, this is typically about 25 acres, but a greater area may be needed in regions with less rainfall. BMPs that focus on source control, such as bioretention, should be considered for smaller drainage areas.

Slope

Wet ponds can be used on sites with an upstream slope up to about 15 percent. The local slope should be relatively shallow, however. Although there is no minimum slope requirement, there does need to be enough elevation drop from the pond inlet to the pond outlet to ensure that water can flow through the system.

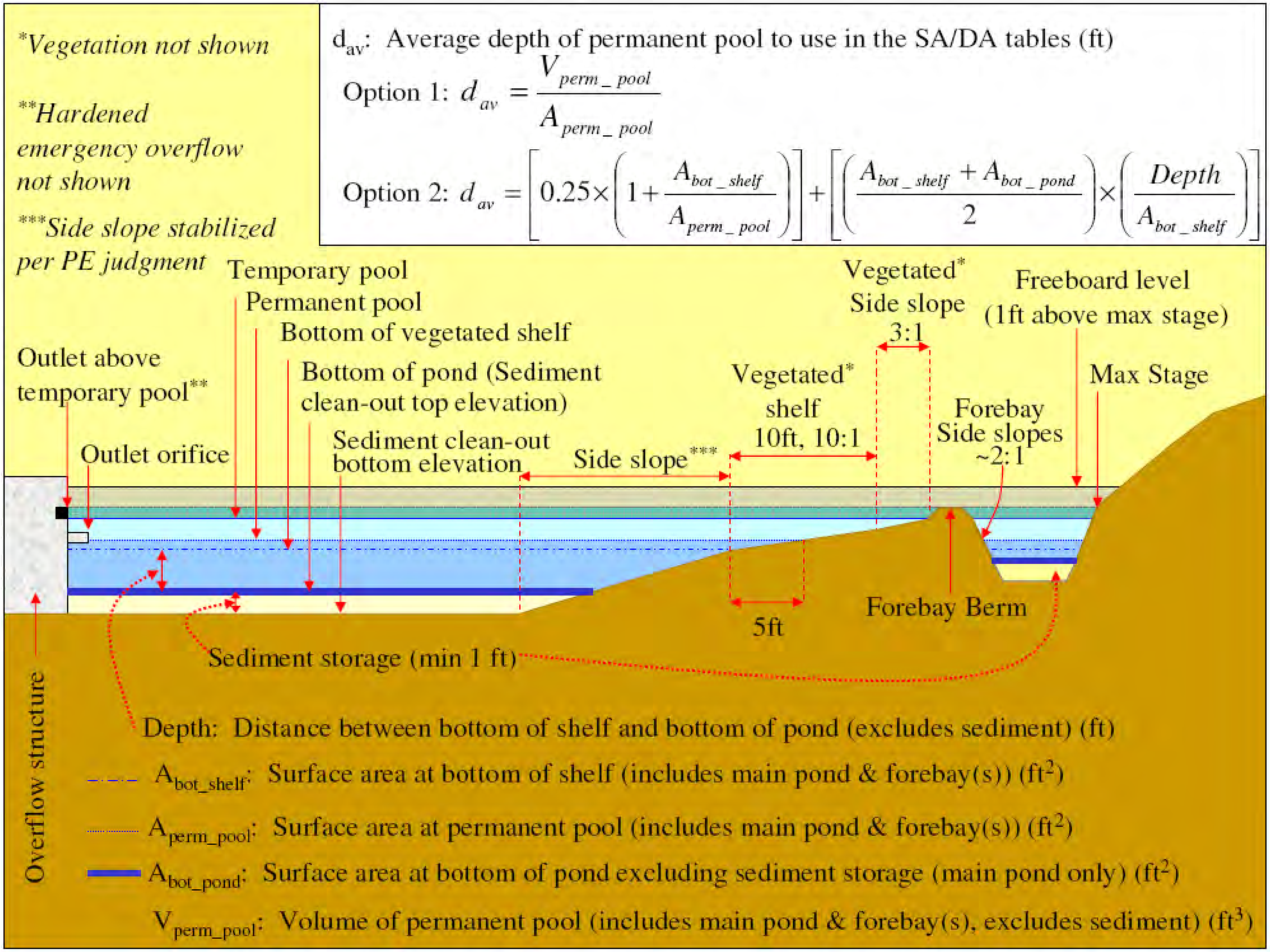


Figure 2 Basic Wet Detention Basin Elements: Cross Section

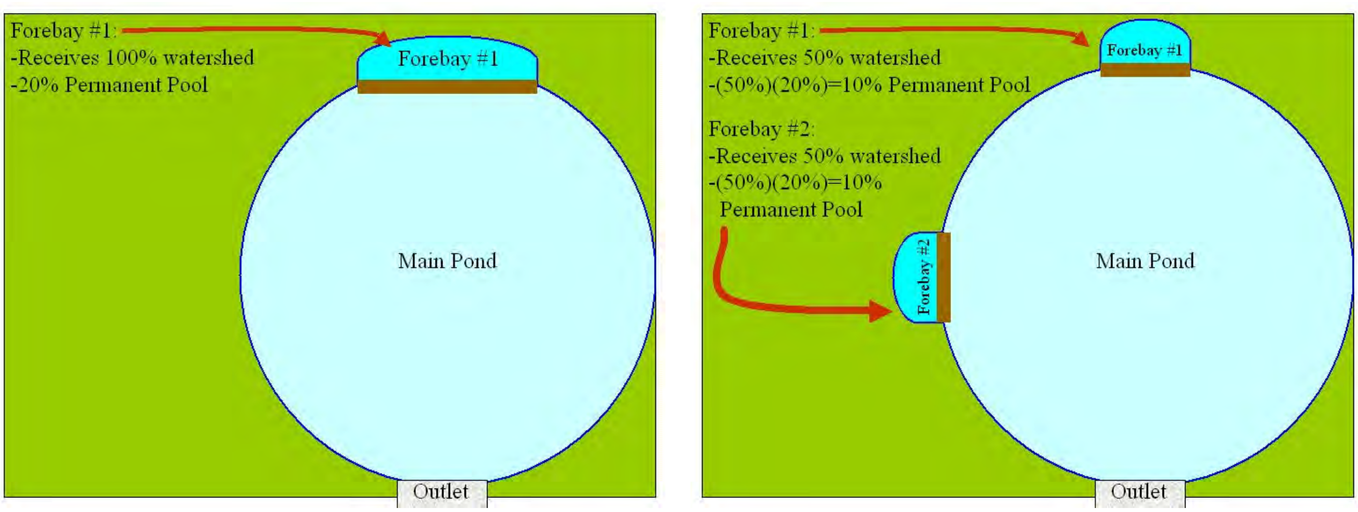
Design Considerations

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

Pretreatment

Forebays are highly recommended on all inlets to a wet detention basin. A properly engineered forebay can concentrate large particle-size sediment for easier removal, and can dissipate the incoming flow energy prior to the stormwater entering the main part of the BMP. The dissipation of incoming flow energy reduces re-suspension of settled material in the main pool, and it reduces the likelihood of erosion features within the BMP. Also, the forebay itself should be configured for energy dissipation within the forebay to avoid re-suspension of large-particle settled material previously captured in the forebay. One of several engineering means of energy dissipation is to have the inlet pipe submerged below the permanent forebay pool level, provided that the inlet placement does not serve to re-suspend previously captured sediment.

It is recommended that the design volume for the forebay be approximately 20% of the total calculated permanent pool volume. The main pool of the permanent pool would then account for approximately 80% of the design volume. If the pond has more than one forebay, the total volume of the forebays should equal 20% of the permanent pool volume. In this case, each forebay should be sized as in Figures 3–5.



Figures 3–4 Forebay Sizing Examples (continued)

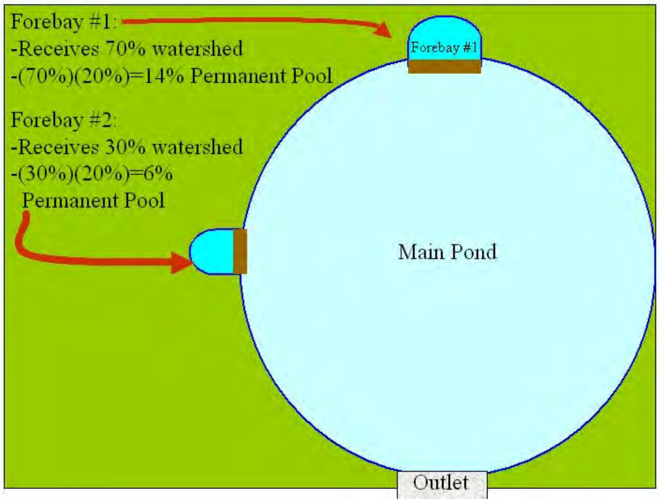


Figure 5 Forebay Sizing Examples (concluded)

Treatment

Treatment design features help enhance the ability of a stormwater management practice to remove pollutants. The purpose of most of these features is to increase the amount of time that stormwater remains in the pond.

One technique of increasing the pollutant removal of a pond is to increase the volume of the permanent pool. Typically, ponds are sized to be equal to the water quality volume (i.e., the volume of water treated for pollutant removal). Designers may consider using a larger volume to meet specific watershed objectives, such as phosphorus removal in a lake system. Regardless of the pool size, designers need to conduct a water balance analysis to ensure that sufficient inflow is available to maintain the permanent pool.

Other design features do not increase the volume of a pond, but can increase the amount of time stormwater remains in the practice and eliminate short-circuiting. Ponds should always be designed with a length-to-width ratio of at least 1.5:1. In addition, the design should incorporate features to lengthen the flow path through the pond, such as underwater berms designed to create a longer route through the pond. Combining these two measures helps ensure that the entire pond volume is used to treat stormwater. Another feature that can improve treatment is to use multiple ponds in series as part of a "treatment train" approach to pollutant removal. This redundant treatment can also help slow the rate of flow through the system. Additionally, a vegetated buffer with shrubs or trees around the pond area should provide shading and consequent cooling of the pond water.

If designers of wet ponds are anticipating ponds that stratify in the summer, they might want to consider installing a fountain or other mixing mechanism. This will ensure that the full water column remains oxic.

Conveyance

Length, Width (Area), Depth, Geometry

Depth is an important engineering design criterion because most of the pollutants are removed through settling. Very shallow basins may develop currents that can re-suspend materials; on the other hand, very deep wet detention basins can become thermally stratified and/or anoxic and release pollutants back into the water.

The engineering design of a wet detention basin must include a 10-foot-wide (minimum) vegetated shelf around the full perimeter of the basin. The inside edge of the shelf shall be no deeper than 6″ below the permanent pool level, and the outside edge shall be 6″ above the permanent pool level. For a 10′ wide shelf, the resulting slope is 10:1. With half the required shelf below the water (maximum depth of 6 inches), and half the required shelf above the water, the vegetated shelf will provide a location for a diverse population of emergent wetland vegetation that enhances biological pollutant removal, provides a habitat for wildlife, protects the shoreline from erosion, and improves sediment trap efficiency. A 10′ wide shelf also provides a safety feature prior to the deeper permanent pool.

Short-circuiting of the stormwater must be prevented. The most direct way of minimizing short-circuiting is to maximize the length of the flow path between the inlet and the outlet: basins with long and narrow shapes can maximize the length of the flow path. Long and narrow but irregularly shaped wet detention basins may appear more natural and therefore may have increased aesthetic value. If local site conditions prohibit a relatively long, narrow facility, baffles may be placed in the wet detention basin to lengthen the stormwater flow path as much as possible. Baffles must extend to the temporary pool elevation or higher. A minimum length-to-width ratio of 1.5:1 is required, but a flow path of at least 3:1 is recommended. Basin shape should minimize dead storage areas and, where possible, the width should expand as it approaches the outlet.

Although larger wet detention basins typically remove more pollutants, a threshold size seems to exist above which further improvement of water quality by sedimentation is negligible. The permanent pool volume within a wet detention basin is calculated as the total volume beneath the permanent pool water level, and above the sediment storage volume, including any such volume within the forebay.

Outlet Design

The outlet device shall be designed to release the temporary pool volume (minimum required treatment volume as calculated by the Simple Method) over a period of 48 to 120 hours (2 to 5 days). Longer detention times typically do not improve settling efficiency significantly, and the temporary pool volume must be available for the next storm. In addition, prolonged periods of inundation can adversely affect the wetland vegetation growing on the vegetated shelf.

In addition to being designed to achieve the 2- to 5-day drawdown period, outlets also must be functionally simple and easy to maintain. One possible configuration option of the outlet piping that simplifies maintenance and reduces the potential for obstruction is the submerged orifice arrangement shown in Figure 6.

Durable materials, such as reinforced concrete, are preferable to corrugated metal in most instances. The riser should be placed in or at the face of the embankment. By placing the riser close to the embankment, maintenance access is facilitated and flotation forces are reduced. The design engineer must present flotation force calculations for any outlet design subject to flotation forces.

Emergency overflow spillways must be designed with hardened materials at the points where extreme conditions might compromise the integrity of the structure.

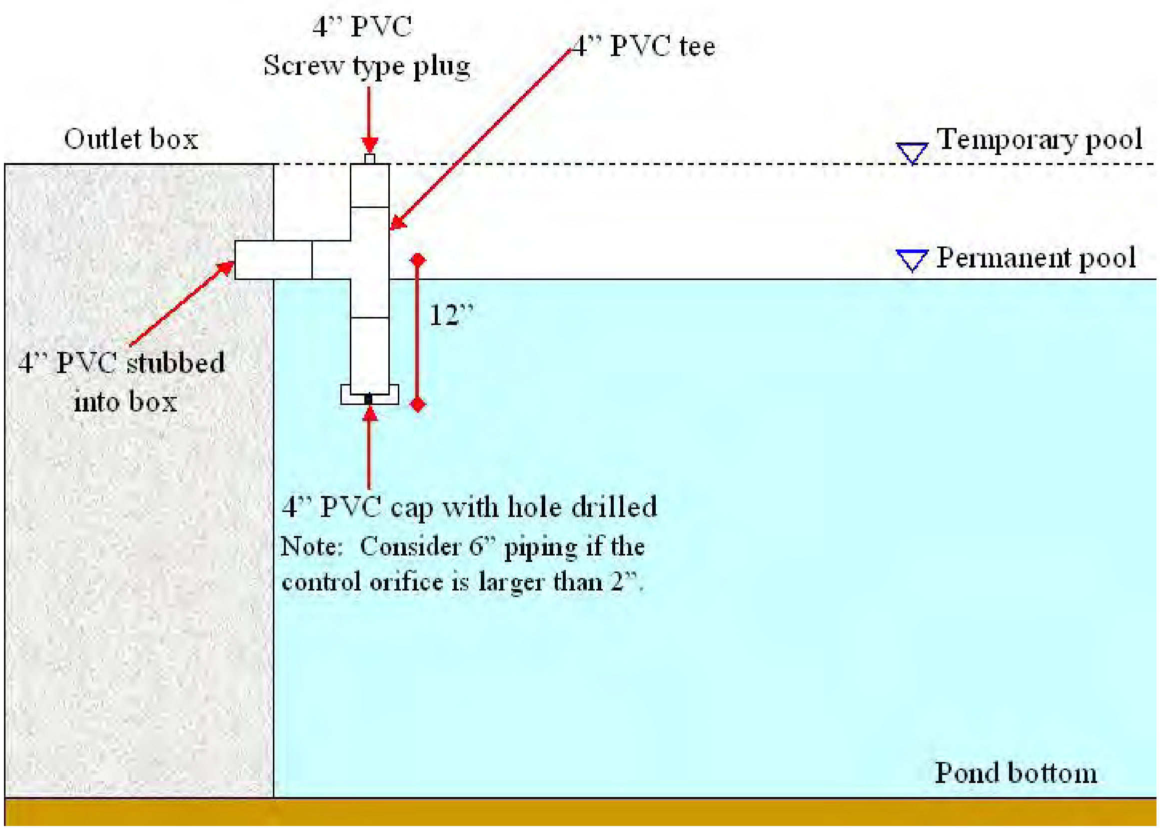


Figure 6

Typical Submerged Orifice Outlet Configuration

Maintenance Reduction

In addition to regular maintenance activities needed to maintain the function of stormwater practices, some design features can be incorporated to ease the maintenance burden of each practice. In wet ponds, maintenance reduction features include techniques to reduce the amount of maintenance needed, as well as techniques to make regular maintenance activities easier.

One potential maintenance concern in wet ponds is clogging of the outlet. Ponds should be designed with a non-clogging outlet such as 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 establishes the water elevation of the permanent pool. Because these outlets draw water from below the level of the permanent pool, they are less likely to be clogged by floating debris. Another general rule is that no orifice should be less than 3 inches in diameter. (Smaller orifices are more susceptible to clogging.)

Design features are also incorporated to ease maintenance of both the forebay and the main pool of ponds. Ponds should be designed with maintenance access to the forebay to ease this relatively routine (5.7 year) maintenance activity. In addition, ponds should generally have a pond drain to draw down the pond for the more infrequent dredging of the main cell of the pond.

Fountains in the Wet Pond

Fountains are optional, decorative wet pond amenities. If they are included, they shall be designed as follows:

1. Ponds smaller than 30,000 ft^3 cannot have a fountain.
2. The fountain must draw its water from less than 2′ below the permanent pool surface.
3. Separated units (where the nozzle, pump and intake are connected by tubing) may be used only if they draw water from the surface in the deepest part of the pond.
4. The falling water from the fountain must be centered in the pond, away from the shoreline.
5. The maximum horsepower for the fountain's pump is based on the permanent pool volume, as described in Table 1. As an example, if the pond's volume is 350,000 cubic feet, the maximum pump horsepower for the fountain is 1.

Table 1
Fountain Pump Power Requirements

Minimum Pond Volume (ft^3)	Max Pump HP
30,000	1/8
40,000	1/6
60,000	1/4
80,000	1/3
125,000	1/2
175,000	3/4
250,000	1
450,000	2
675,000	3

Landscaping

Landscaping of wet ponds can make them an asset to a community and can also enhance the pollutant removal of the practice. A vegetated buffer should be preserved around the pond to protect the banks from erosion and provide some pollutant removal before runoff enters the pond by overland flow. In addition, ponds should incorporate an aquatic bench (i.e., a shallow shelf with wetland plants) around the edge of the pond. This feature may provide some pollutant uptake, and it also helps to stabilize the soil at the edge of the pond and enhance habitat and aesthetic value.

Construction Considerations

Even moderate rainfall events during the construction of a wet detention basin can cause extensive damage to it. Protective measures should be employed both in the contributing drainage area, and at the wet detention basin itself. Temporary drainage or erosion control measures should be used to reduce the potential for damage to the wet detention basin before the site is stabilized. The control measures may include stabilizing the surface with erosion mats, sediment traps, and diversions. Vegetative cover and the emergency spillway also should be completed as quickly as possible during construction.

The designer should address the potential for bedding erosion and catastrophic failure of any buried outlet conduit. A filter diaphragm and drain system should be provided along the barrel of the principal spillway to prevent piping. There has been an evolution in standard practice, and the accumulated evidence suggests that, in most circumstances, filter diaphragms are much superior to anti-seep collars in preventing piping. Filter diaphragms are preferred over the older design anti-seep collar.

If reinforced concrete pipe is used for the principal spillway, “O-ring” gaskets (ASTM C361) should be used to create watertight joints and should be inspected during installation.

Safety Considerations

The permanent pool of water presents an attractive play area to children and thus may create safety problems. Engineering design features that discourage child access are recommended. Trash racks and other debris-control structures should be sized to prevent entry by children. Other safety considerations include using fences around the spillway structure, embankment, and wet detention basin slopes; using shallow safety benches around the wet detention basin; and posting warning signs.

Fencing of wet detention basins is not generally aesthetically pleasing but may be required by the local review authority. A preferred method is to engineer the contours of the wet detention basin to eliminate drop-offs and other safety hazards as discussed above. Riser openings must not permit unauthorized access. End walls above pipe outfalls greater than 48 inches in diameter should be fenced to prevent falls.

Design Variations

There are several variations of the wet pond design. Some of these design alternatives are intended to make the practice adaptable to various sites and to account for regional constraints and opportunities.

Wet Extended Detention Pond

The wet extended detention pond combines the treatment concepts of the dry extended detention pond and the wet pond. In this design, the water quality volume is split between the permanent pool and detention storage provided above the permanent pool. During storm events, water is detained above the permanent pool and released over 12 to 48 hours. This design has similar pollutant removal to a traditional wet pond and consumes less space. Wet extended detention ponds should be designed to maintain at least half the treatment volume of the permanent pool. In addition, designers need to carefully select vegetation to be planted in the extended detention zone to ensure that the selected vegetation can withstand both wet and dry periods.

Water Reuse Pond

Some designers have used wet ponds to act as a water source, usually for irrigation. In this case, the water balance should account for the water that will be taken from the pond. One study conducted in Florida estimated that a water reuse pond could provide irrigation for a 100-acre golf course at about one-seventh the cost of the market rate of the equivalent amount of water ($40,000 versus $300,000).

Common Problems

Limitations of wet ponds include:

- If improperly located, wet pond construction may cause loss of wetlands or forest.
- Wet ponds are often inappropriate in dense urban areas because each pond is generally quite large.
- Wet ponds may pose safety hazards.

Maintenance

– Immediately after the wet detention basin is established, the plants on the vegetated shelf and perimeter of the basin should be watered twice weekly, if needed, until the plants become established (commonly six weeks).

– No portion of the wet detention pond should be fertilized after the first initial fertilization that is required to establish the plants on the vegetated shelf.

– Stable groundcover should be maintained in the drainage area to reduce the sediment load to the wet detention basin.

- If the basin must be drained for an emergency or to perform maintenance, the flushing of sediment through the emergency drain should be minimized to the maximum extent practical.

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