



SWALE FACT SHEET

It is important to understand how stormwater is conveyed through your community and property to the stormwater management facility.

Proper maintenance of swales can prevent costly repairs or property damage.

ABOUT SWALES

Swales are linear open channels that convey stormwater runoff and provide water quality treatment and flow attenuation (ability to trap and store floodwaters and release through natural drainage pathways).

Sussex County has very little topographic relief and swales are typically constructed with minimum slope.

The gradual slope can promote filtering and attenuation; however, it has the potential to be wet after frequent or significant rainfalls.

Regular maintenance ensures the continued optimum function of the swale.

Vegetated swales are preferred over curb and gutter systems because they provide many environmental benefits.

Bioswales can be enhanced with native plants.



SWALE BENEFITS

- Filters pollutants and sediment
- Improves water quality
- Promotes infiltration
- Recharges groundwater
- Slows and reduces runoff
- Reduces erosion
- Minimizes flooding
- Low maintenance
- Cost effective



A bioswale is a stormwater best management practice.

SWALE TYPES & JURISDICTION

In Sussex County there are several types of swales and jurisdiction is based on the community construction status.

- **Roadside swale** - located parallel to a roadway, it is not owned by an individual property owner.
JURISDICTION: varies based on construction status.
- **Bioswales** - located in community open space.
JURISDICTION: varies based on construction status.
- **Rear and side yard swales** - located between homes on private property.
JURISDICTION: HOA/Homeowner. SCD can provide technical assistance.

SWALE DON'TS

Follow these tips to keep your swales in optimum condition.

DO NOT: Mow swales following a rain event and avoid mowing in the same pattern. Tire ruts can block the flow of water.

DO NOT: Park or drive across a swale.

DO NOT: Fill swales or dispose of leaf litter, lawn clippings or landscape debris in the swale.

DO NOT: Place sprinklers in a swale or run irrigation while raining. Overirrigation can result in poor drainage.

DO NOT: Install fences or sheds in or around a swale.

DO NOT: Plant trees or shrubs in a swale.

DO NOT: Allow trees or shrubs to grow in a swale.



Fences can impede drainage when placed in a swale.



Overirrigation can cause vegetation to die which leads to erosion.



Roadside swale landscaping impedes drainage; discolored grass is an indicator of poor drainage.



Ponding, or water that lasts more than 48-72 hours in a swale, indicates a drainage problem.



Discolored vegetation indicates that the root system is saturated by over irrigation or poor drainage.

MAINTENANCE

Inspect facilities after storm events with two or more inches of rain.

Swales should drain in 48-72 hours.

The ground inside the swale is likely to remain soggy for more than 72 hours after a significant rain event.

AS NEEDED: Remove trash and debris on a regular basis.

SEMIANNUALLY: Check swales in the spring and fall for erosion and bare spots. Repair as needed.

MOWING: Keep grass no shorter than six inches. SCD recommends mowing in mid-March and weekly from April to November if turf cover is used.

Minimize the use of fertilizer, pesticides and herbicides.

Keep driveway culverts clear.

NOTE: If severe erosion or ponding is observed, contact your local conservation district or a professional. This could be an indication of a pipe failure or blockage.

ACTIVE CONSTRUCTION STATUS

If a community is under active construction, the developer is responsible for repairing swales. If water is observed in roadside swales for more than 48-72 hours and dead grass is present, please contact Sussex County Public Works at 302-855-7703.

COMPLETE CONSTRUCTION STATUS

When construction is completed and the community is signed over to the HOA, the homeowner and HOA are responsible for maintaining and repairing swales. SCD can provide technical assistance with rear, side yard and bioswales.

QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

contact

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