

Erosion and Sedimentation

Position Statement

BACKGROUND

Erosion and sedimentation are natural processes that began when the earth was formed and have continued throughout time. South Dakota has areas, especially in the western part of the state, where geologic erosion is still active.

The quest for a more stable way of life and the need for food, fiber and other agricultural products has resulted in many types of land disturbing activities. Farming and ranching, urban development, and construction contribute significantly to accelerated erosion and sedimentation in South Dakota.

When the surface layer is removed by wind and water erosion, the soil becomes less productive. Sediment resulting from erosion moves over the land, destroys crops, damages fences, roads, and bridges, clogs drainageways, fills lakes and streams, destroys fisheries, decreases water quality, places additional tax burdens on the public, and reduces the quality of life.

While human activities can degrade the environment we also have the technology to develop and use the land without creating these problems. There are many examples in our state and nation where erosion and sedimentation problems have been successfully solved,

THE CHAPTER'S POSITION

The South Dakota Chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society is a voluntary organization of practicing land owners, professional conservationists, and other concerned citizens. Members share a common interest in advancing the science and art of good land and water use. The Chapter believes that all erosion and sedimentation policies must be based on the principles of sound land and water use.

It is the position of the South Dakota Chapter that:

- soil, air and water are finite resources essential to our well-being; therefore, we cannot afford to damage them resources by accelerated erosion and sedimentation.

- all individuals involved with land disturbing activities must be made aware of the potential hazards from these operations and must plan and carry out necessary precautions to assure that damage does not occur.

- soil surveys developed by professional scientists indicate suitabilities and limitations of soils. These surveys should be used by public and private agencies, groups, or individuals to determine best management practices where land disturbing activities are anticipated.

- resource planning, application of conservation practices, and other technology will control or alleviate most human created erosion hazards and resultant damages to land and water.
- better methods of control for erosion and sedimentation problem are still awaiting discovery; research must be continued to attain this knowledge.
- the soil fertility and erosion control values of plant residues should be fully recognized before these residues are considered for other uses. Management of crop residue through reduced tillage systems will reduce production costs as well as help control erosion and sedimentation.
- public cost-share is needed for the development of systems essential to reduce erosion and sedimentation damage, especially where system costs cannot be recovered by the individuals applying the treatment.
- coordination between units of government, individuals, groups, and state and federal agencies is necessary to promote installation of erosion control systems on a voluntary basis.
- decisions and laws enacted to assure protective measures to control erosion, sedimentation, air and water pollution, and assure quality of life are best decided and enforced at the local level.
- organized conservation districts are the local units of government which should provide the leadership in erosion and sedimentation control. South Dakota Conservation District Law Section 38-8A provides the enabling legislation for local control.

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