

BENTON COUNTY STORMWATER PROGRAM

-Silt Fences-

What on Earth is a silt fence?

Well, you might guess just by the name! A silt fence is a temporary fencing structure put into place to keep exposed soils contained within a site and prevent them from entering nearby waterways and polluting them. They are one of the first lines of defense when it comes to construction sites, and you have probably seen these black plastic barriers up and around many locations.

One of the main environmental issues around construction and development is the clearing of the top layer of vegetation and soil known as a 'ground disturbing activity'. Plants and their roots keep soil in place, allow for natural filtration of stormwater into the ground, and naturally prevent pollution from running down storm drains and into natural waterways.

Properly installing a silt fence

*Like most tools, silt fences only work if they are used properly! Rather than primarily being an 'above ground' barrier, silt fences do almost all of their work at the soil level and below. A silt fence installed just to sit on the ground doesn't work very well, because after a storm, water and mud can flow underneath. Therefore, it's important that these barriers be buried and secured to retain pollution. **The silt fence shown on the right was poorly installed and isn't doing a very good job of preventing pollution! Picture: kitsappgov.com***



A bigger picture – erosion and sediment control

Did you know that the methods used to prevent erosion and water pollution at development sites are closely regulated by the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)? The DEQ issues permits to other governments (like Benton County) who must follow DEQ rules and ensure that those in their county also follow these rules. So, wherever you go, these erosion and sediment control practices look very similar from place to place. Next time you pass a construction site, be sure to look for a silt fence, and try to see if you can point out other items that might be there to prevent erosion or sediment pollution!

Learn More!

Marys River Watershed Council

<https://www.mrwc.org/>

Luckiamute Watershed Council

<https://www.luckiamutelwc.org/>

Mid-coast Watershed Council

<http://www.midcoastwatersheds.org/>

Long Tom Watershed Council

<https://www.longtom.org/>

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Or visit to learn more:
pw.bentoncountyor.gov/stormwater