

HOW TO MAINTAIN YOUR GRASS CHANNEL

WHAT IS A GRASS CHANNEL?

A grass channel (or ditch) collects rainwater from hard surfaces and allows it to filter into the ground, thereby removing some of the sediment and pollution in the stormwater leaving the road or property. The grass covering the side slopes and channel bottom filters the water and helps slow it down. In steeper areas, some channels have small dams made of stone or concrete (check dams) built across the width to slow the stormwater down more, which helps to prevent erosion and gives the water a little more time to filter into the ground. During large storms, grass channels can direct extra runoff to other stormwater management areas.

WHY ARE GRASS CHANNELS IMPORTANT?

Grass channels:

- Help reduce street flooding.
- Improve the health of local waterways by removing pollutants and sediment from stormwater runoff.

Why is it important to maintain your grass channel?

An unmaintained grass channel may:

- Lose the ability to filter stormwater runoff and will allow pollutants to enter local waterways.
- Become blocked which can lead to flooding and breeding of insects such as mosquitos.

By maintaining your grass channel, you are doing your part to help protect your local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. Maintaining your grass channel may be required by your local VSMP (Virginia Stormwater Management Program) Authority.

GOOD TO DO...

Monthly

- ✓ Remove leaves, trash and debris from the grass channel.

Seasonally

- ✓ Each spring, plant grass in bare areas to maintain a 90% grass cover in the channel.
- ✓ Each fall, remove leaves.
- ✓ Mow grasses no shorter than 3 inches; remove or compost grass clippings.
- ✓ Inspect check dams. Repair and clean, if needed.
- ✓ Inspect channel bottom for areas of standing water or dead vegetation.

As Needed

- ✓ Inspect channel after storm events for erosion or areas where leaves, trash and other debris have collected.
- ✓ Contact your local VSMP authority for continued maintenance concerns or issues.

DON'T...

- ✗ Use fertilizer or pesticides in or near your grass channel.
- ✗ Mow directly after a rain event.
- ✗ Mow grasses shorter than 3 inches.

Grass channels need regular maintenance, similar to other landscaped areas. This includes removing trash/debris and mowing grass.



Poorly Maintained Grass Channel



Properly Maintained Grass Channel



CAN I REMOVE THE GRASS CHANNEL?

If your grass channel was installed as a condition of development, it cannot be removed. It is best to contact your local Virginia Stormwater Management Program (VSMP) Authority to discuss options before making any changes to your grass channel.

TROUBLESHOOTING	SYMPTOM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	SOLUTION
	Standing water	If standing water occurs for over 48 hours, the grass channel could be clogged.	The surface of the channel may need to be amended with more permeable soil, tilled, and replanted.
	Erosion	The runoff is moving too fast or the vegetation has died.	Stabilize the soil by planting new grass. Use rocks to stabilize the flow if needed.

RECOMMENDED TIMEFRAMES FOR TYPICAL MAINTENANCE

	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
Remove leaves and debris	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mowing (at least twice per year)			✓					✓				

WHAT IF I NEED HELP OR HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

Your municipality or local VSMP (Virginia Stormwater Management Program) Authority can answer your questions and provide additional guidance about maintaining your stormwater facility.

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