



Jeffrey Askew

## Assets Assessment

How does your group fare in terms of BMP upkeep?

Regular maintenance is key to the effective performance and long life of structural storm water best management practices (BMPs). Sparse formal guidance and a customary install-and-leave-it approach, however, have questions abounding industry-wide regarding the logistics of BMP upkeep. *SWS* Managing Editor Caitlin Cunningham turned to maintenance guru Jeffrey Askew of Storm Water Services to shed light on the challenges and offer solutions.

**Caitlin Cunningham:** Overall, how well would you say storm water BMP end-users maintain installed systems? Please explain.

**Jeffrey Askew:** Overall, I would give the end-users an 'F' in cleaning and maintenance. About one out of four that know about their system and responsibility will take care of it when they have an available and affordable provider. Most owners do not even know that they have a BMP.

We find that the problem is worse for public domain land-based systems. To be fair, those who do clean their systems do a great job. Those who ignore the need fail totally. There are very few people in between.

**Cunningham:** What effects can negligence have on structural BMPs?

**Askew:** It is understood that the common effect of not cleaning is operational failure of the BMP and the discharge of pollutants downstream. There can be damage to the structure itself over time, where parts are overloaded or broken, filters blown out, seals deteriorated and absorbent materials' ability to work exhausted. There can also be damage to systems and property upstream, as pipe or swales flood due to a clogged BMP.

**Cunningham:** Who should be responsible for tracking maintenance requirements? Conducting the work?

**Askew:** The jurisdiction required the BMP under their permit, and they should follow up to see that it is working properly. For those that have a storm water utility, the work should be the responsibility of the jurisdiction.

For others, it can be a simple process. First, require a maintenance and inspection procedure for every BMP and a schedule for both. It can then be the duty of the owner to have the inspection or maintenance done and to provide paperwork to the jurisdiction. Those who fail to meet their schedule can be notified in writing first and then visited by an inspector—at the expense of the nonresponding owner—to determine if the site is in compliance. This is where the system is broken now.

**Cunningham:** What can the industry do to promote routine maintenance?

**Askew:** Education, education, education. When the Stormwater Equipment Manufacturers Association was formed, their first area of agreement was that routine maintenance is vital, and that was the first committee formed. The fact is that manufacturers of BMPs spend millions on developing and testing products with the maximum efficiency, and it's a shame to let them fail for lack of proper maintenance. Most end-users want to do their part and only need a working system to plug into.

**Cunningham:** Do you have any additional advice or resources to offer?

**Askew:** While regulators fret over particle size, testing and protocols, they spend almost no time worrying about what happens to BMPs in the field. It is time that the true performance of BMPs, including maintenance and cleaning, becomes the major emphasis for water quality—not an afterthought.

As a resource, call your manufacturer or site designer. **SWS**

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