



Erosion and Sedimentation

Muskegon River Erosion & Sedimentation Control

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The question posed to erosion control project managers is: Why don't we just leave the streams and rivers alone to do what they have done for millions of years? Because, when man stepped on the earth the natural forces were no longer free to do their artistry on the landscape.

Erosion of streambanks and sedimentation into a stream system is a natural geological occurrence. Water flow slowly changes the landscape and moves sediment downstream in the system. That movement is unique to each watershed system depending on land slope, soil, rainfall and other factors. The Muskegon River is primarily a sand soil base so it has substantially more movement of sediments compared to rock or clay based systems. Stopping all erosion is not needed and would greatly upset the natural landscape change and ecosystem development within a watershed. Erosion control projects are not intended to interrupt these natural landscape-forming forces but are a consideration when other outside forces affect nature.

We are no longer involved with a natural erosion system since it has been greatly altered for several hundred years by man's land use changes. When we change forests and grasslands into cities and housing areas with little infiltration we increase the flow of water into the surface channels that ultimately enter a stream.

This increase in the water flow quantity and velocity accelerates the natural erosion and speeds up the geological clock. It is this accelerated erosion that conservationists try to stabilize to minimize the impact from man's land use changes.

Timberland Resource Conservation & Development Council began Muskegon River bank erosion control efforts in 1998 and continues to work on future projects with the MRWA and its many partners. Five major sites were stabilized in 1998, five sites were completed in 1999, one site in 2000 and one site in 2001. Currently, four sites in Hardy and Croton Ponds and two sites on the Muskegon River are planned for completion this year.



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