



Fast Facts

Sediment carried by storm runoff from construction sites is the leading source of non-point source pollution in our streams, rivers, lakes and estuaries.

Georgia's riverkeepers found that *two-thirds* of the construction sites they investigated had major violations of clean water regulations.

In metro Atlanta an average of 55 acres, or 41 football fields, are covered with impervious surfaces like roads, rooftops and parking lots every single day.

For each of the past four fiscal years, the state legislature has failed to appropriate \$1 million or more of collected user fees back to Georgia EPD for use in program administration and enforcement.

For More Information:
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Reducing Muddy Runoff from Construction Sites

What's at Stake?

Sediment carried by stormwater runoff from construction sites and other land disturbing activities has been documented as the leading source of non-point source pollution to streams, lakes, rivers and estuaries in Georgia. The sediment that flows into our waterways after it rains can result in serious environmental and economic impacts—decreasing storage capacity for drinking water supplies, increasing water treatment costs, damaging recreational areas and natural ecosystems, and decreasing property values.

Challenges

To minimize the environmental and economic impacts of sedimentation, construction sites are regulated by the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) with general construction stormwater permits as well as by local government ordinances in Georgia. These regulations require that developers install best management practices such as silt fences to minimize sediment loss and provide limits for how much sediment can be discharged during storm events.

Local, state, and federal personnel are responsible for inspecting the construction sites on a routine basis to ensure that developers are complying with the regulations and they are required to impose enforcement actions when a violation is found. A major problem in Georgia is that most of the government agencies responsible for inspection are understaffed and/or not properly trained to inspect and enforce the best practices at all construction sites.

Working with other riverkeepers and watershed groups, Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper studied the effectiveness of Georgia's erosion control program in 2005-06, supported by a grant from the U.S. EPA. Project partners visited more than 100 construction sites throughout the state during the study period and determined that *two-thirds* of the sites investigated had major violations of state regulations, threatening the health of nearby waterways.

Next Steps

- *Better Education:* We need more and better training for developers, regulators, engineers, citizens, and elected officials on cost-effective best practices that will protect our water supplies and the places where we fish, boat and swim.
- *More Inspectors:* The state and local agencies responsible for the enforcement of Georgia's erosion and sediment control program must have adequate funds to hire and properly train inspection staff. User fees that are paid by developers to the state Environmental Protection Division (EPD) *must* be fully appropriated every year by the state legislature to support these programs.
- *Stronger Regulations:* In high impact areas, consideration should be given to increasing the width of required buffers along streams, lakes, marshes and other waterways; the maximum allowable fines should be increased to deter potential violators.