

**County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
Lower May Sediment Placement Site
Landscaping Improvement Project
Frequently Asked Questions**

1) What is May Sediment Placement Site?

May Sediment Placement Site, located in the Sylmar area of the City of Los Angeles and in operation since the 1960s, is one of many sediment placement facilities owned by the Los Angeles County Flood Control District and operated by the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works. Sediment placement sites are used as sites to relocate soil and rock cleaned out of the region's flood protection and water conservation facilities. Sediment is initially stockpiled at these sites, followed by permanent placement according to grading and fill plans developed to provide proper drainage, stability, safety, and efficiency. During sediment stockpiling and placement activities, operations are carefully overseen by Public Works personnel.

These facilities and the availability of sediment placement sites to serve them are critical to Public Works' ability to help provide sustainable water supplies and reduce flood risk to the region's communities, including Sylmar. Additional information on why sediment management is important can be found at Public Works' Sediment Management website:

<http://dpw.lacounty.gov/lacfcd/sediment/bkg.aspx>.

2) What is being proposed?

We are proposing a landscaping improvement project along the lower portion of the May Sediment Placement Site, along its south border with the residences along Almetz Street. The project is being proposed to improve the appearance of May Sediment Placement Site's "front yard" with the neighborhood. The proposed project will have the added benefits of reduced erosion and dust.

The elements of the proposed project are:

- Landscaping that consists of native species of trees, shrubs, and ground cover.
- Ornamental fencing at high visibility locations.
- Enlarging and installing improved outlet structures at five existing de-silting basins.
- Re-locating the outlet of an existing earthen swale away from a street (Winlaw Avenue) and connecting to one of the de-silting basins being enlarged. Caged rock (gabions) will also be placed in the swale so flows within the swale do not pick up additional soil and add to the flows' sediment load.
- Planting (hydroseeding) with native ground cover species in areas just above the de-silting basins.

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- 3) Does the proposed project have anything to do with the proposed Pacoima Reservoir cleanout project?

The project is not related to the proposed cleanout of Pacoima Reservoir. **May Sediment Placement Site is not going to be used for the Pacoima Reservoir cleanout project.** (Go to <http://dpw.lacounty.gov/wrd/Projects/Pacoima/display.cfm?Project=Pacoima&site=wrđ> for details on the Pacoima Reservoir Sediment Removal Project.)

- 4) How will the project affect neighborhood residents?

Neighborhood residents will benefit from the improved appearance of the site, reduction of sediment in the runoff from the site during most storms, and reduced dust.

Construction is slated to begin in late summer/fall 2016 and is expected to be completed by spring 2017.

At the start of project construction, neighborhood residents will likely see a few trucks carrying grading equipment to the site. This equipment will be used for the first phase of construction, which is to increase the size of the site's existing de-silting basins. Equipment such as loaders will likely be used to place the caged rock in the drainage swale.

The overall scale of grading for the project is small. Minimal dust is expected to be generated on the project site during construction activities, including use of earth-moving equipment. Our contractor will be contractually obligated to employ best management practices (also known as "BMPs") to reduce dust and comply with the rules and regulations of the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

Once the basin and swale work is complete, residents will see the same type of trucks that a normal landscape contractor would use. There will be trucks delivering irrigation pipes and parts, ornamental fencing, plants and mulch. For the hydroseeding (the ground cover planting) there will be trucks similar in looks and size to common water trucks. Hydroseeding, fencing, irrigation, and planting are slated to take place in fall 2016/winter 2017.

Project activities are expected to occur during the same work hours and work days as those for any property improvement project utilizing a contractor and subject to the City of Los Angeles' Noise Ordinance. Residents may hear the sound of trucks, equipment, and the voices of construction personnel between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays. The site itself will feature sufficient parking for workers' commuter vehicles so they aren't required to use the local streets.

Once the project is complete, the project elements will require maintenance. The proposed landscaping is meant to be drought tolerant and low maintenance. For the first two to three years following planting, the landscaping will be regularly irrigated and monitored. Irrigation frequency and

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timing will comply with the City's Water Conservation Ordinance. The maintenance will include weeding until the plants are well enough established to survive on their own and be resistant to invasive weeds. Noise and vehicle traffic associated with these activities will be minimal.

The de-silting basins will have to undergo periodic cleanouts in order to keep their stormwater and sediment retention at peak capacity. The frequency of these cleanouts will depend on the frequency and intensity of storm events (the more often storm runoff occurs, the more often the basins will need to be cleaned out). Similar sites have undergone cleanouts once every 5 to 10 years. Cleanouts would be more frequent if wildfires burn the hillsides within the site again.

5) Will the project eliminate all of the sediment deposits on the streets?

No, but the ability of the site's features to lessen erosion and retain the sediment will be largely improved. Due to the erosive (and sediment producing) nature of the hillsides in the area, sediment is a natural component of the area's hillside runoff. In smaller storm events, the proposed improvements will go a long way towards keeping the sediment on the site. In exceptionally intense storm events, runoff making its way to the streets may still contain noticeable amounts of sediment.

6) How will the project's landscaping work with local fire codes and drought rules?

The native drought-tolerant species selected for planting will be consistent with the County of Los Angeles' Fuel Modification Plan Guidelines, which are compliant with the requirements of the City of Los Angeles' ordinances that govern landscaping in areas of high fire hazards.

Although irrigation will temporarily be needed to establish the proposed plants, native species use much less water than thirsty non-native species that have been commonly used in landscaping. The native species are adapted to eventually be independent of artificial irrigation. Therefore, planting these species is in line with the City's goal to reduce water consumption.

7) It seems like a lot of dust regularly comes off of the May Sediment Placement Site. Why does this happen and what can be done to minimize it?

Neighborhood residents over the last several years have voiced their concerns that our operations at May Sediment Placement Site have resulted in elevated dust levels in the area. We do employ dust control measures (water trucks, street sweepers) at and around the site during sediment placement operations. We have also implemented hydroseeding and binders on the sediment fill slopes, along with high compaction on the flat areas at the tops of fill. These measures make the worked areas significantly less prone to winds. Monitors from the South Coast Air Quality Management District have inspected our operations and found the operations to be compliant with their rules and regulations.

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The dust control measures, however, do not apply to non-work areas that have their own natural dust generation issues. The rock and soil of the hillsides of this region are highly fractured and loose. This makes the material highly prone to transport by runoff, and also makes the fine particle elements of the soil (dust) prone to becoming airborne by the high winds that so often occur in the region. The effects of this condition worsened starting in 2008. The 2008 Sayre Fire eliminated the vegetation on the hillsides within and surrounding May Sediment Placement Site. Without that vegetation to help hold the soil intact, the soil became even more prone to being taken up by winds. The areas nearby burned by the 2008 Merek, 2008 Sesnon, and 2009 Station Fires are also subject to the same high winds. In addition to elevating dust levels in those areas, wind-borne dust from the Merek, Sesnon and Station Fire areas likely makes its way to the May Sediment Placement Site area, adding to the impacts to the local neighborhood. Reestablishment of vegetation in burn areas typically takes several years following a wildfire event, longer when combined with drought conditions. Elevated dust levels in the vicinity of the burn areas will persist until there is enough vegetation to reduce the effects.

8) Will the project affect sediment placement operations at the site?

This proposed project, located in the lower portion of the May Sediment Placement Site, will not affect sediment placement operations at the site. Sediment placement operations are confined to the upper portion of the site.

Apart from routine maintenance of the sites' access roads and drainage gutters/inlets, and low-level cleanouts of one or two debris basins, activity levels at sediment placement sites can be very low and even idle for several years. Sediment placement activities increase when a fire triggers the need for pre-emptive cleanouts of fire area facilities before storms arrive, or sediment deposition occurs in facilities after large storms or moderate storms on burned watersheds. The large sediment volumes associated with a single large storm or from several years of elevated sediment runoff from burned watershed conditions can result in prolonged usage of a sediment placement site to restore impacted facilities.

This is what happened several years ago, with the occurrence of the 2004-05 Storm Season (which had the second largest rainfall totals since rainfall record collection started in the 1870s), and severe fire seasons in 2008 and 2009. (The Station Fire in 2009 was the largest fire in the recorded history of Los Angeles County.) These events, with their scale and their timing, impacted so many debris basins at once that multiple sediment placement sites, including May Sediment Placement Site, had to be activated at the same time to handle the sediment volumes. (The other facilities in the western area of the County that were activated were: Browns Sediment Placement Site in the Porter Ranch area; Dunsmuir Sediment Placement Site in Glendale; Zachau Sediment Placement Site in Tujunga; Scholl Canyon Landfill in Glendale; and Sunshine Canyon Landfill in the western Sylmar area.)

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Currently, there are no sediment placement operations taking place at the site. The occurrence of new sediment placement activities will depend on the amount of sediment storms bring to facilities, or the occurrence of new fires in the region.

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