

CITY OF SIERRA VISTA
WASH AND DRAINAGE WAY AREA
MAINTENANCE POLICY

FINAL POLICY

The goal of this new policy is to reduce the potential for flooding during wet seasons and wildfires during dry seasons, by removing vegetation and debris from urban washes and drainage ways. The Public Works Department will strive to ensure that washes and drainage ways within our city flow freely and do not pool or pond in any areas other than established and designated detention/retention basins, and our natural stilling and/or scour basins which shall be documented during regular maintenance. This policy provides guidelines for maintenance that will provide a good balance between keeping washes and drainage ways flowing while also protecting wildlife habitat that is located along the banks of washes.

GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

The City of Sierra Vista's Streets Division will perform maintenance on the sandy bottoms of all natural and man-made waterways within the City limits, where proper right-of-way has been obtained. Work by City Streets crews will be limited to the City owned property. Because every wash is different, the City has established different maintenance schedules based on need and resources. The Public Works Department has divided all major water courses within City Limits, into three separate groups. A grouping was also added for basins in order to define maintenance procedures for these drainage structures since they are constructed within or adjacent to the City's washes and drainage ways. The groups are:

- A. Washes that are located in high density developed areas of the City – Their primary function is to move storm water out of the watershed. These washes will receive the most aggressive maintenance.
- B. Washes that are located in areas that will allow for the potential to develop recreational features along them or already contain parks and/or shared use paths (i.e. linear parks).
- C. Natural drainage ways that contain large riparian areas that are to be preserved in as natural state as possible – where development is usually held to a boundary of 50 feet from the bank of the sandy channel bottom or at least the limits of the thicker, well nourished vegetation. These washes will receive the least amount of maintenance and will contain recommendations that not only keep the wash flowing, but also preserves wildlife habitat within and around the wash banks.
- D. Detention basins and retention basins are constructed on, or adjacent to, washes and/or drainage ways to protect against flooding and, in some cases, downstream erosion or wash "incising". Detention basins store water for a limited amount of time by metering out storm-flow, while retention basins hold water until the contents evaporate or soak into the soil.

Below is a list of washes and basins maintained by the City, with the classifications listed after them. It is noted that some washes will contain more than one designation, and that crossroads or other physical features were used to describe the locations where a wash may change its function and/or category.

Soldiers Creek – B / (between North Garden Ave to SR 90 – C)

Fab Avenue Drainage Way / Vista Village Drainage Way - A / (After construction of Multi-Use Path (MUP), future classification between 7th Street and SR 90 - B)

Fab Avenue Detention Basin - D

Graveyard Gulch - C

Las Haciendas - C

Casa Adobe – C

Busby Detention Basin - D

3rd Street Drainage Way / Buena No. 3 Drainage Way – A / (From Fry Blvd to Coronado – B)

Woodcutters Detention Basin - D

Woodcutters Canyon Wash - B

Charleston Wash – B / (from Coronado to SR 90 and from Cochise College to the City Limit – C)

Buena High School Drainage Way – A

Rostron Detention Basin - D

Fire Station 3 Detention Basin - D

Town and Country Drainage Way – B

Kings Manor Drainage Way – A

Montebello Drainage Way - A

Seventh Street Detention Basin - D

Coyote Wash - A / (After construction of MUP, future Classification between Buffalo Soldier Trail (BST) to Coronado Drive – B)

Cloud Nine Detention Basin – D (In Design)

Snyder Drainage Way – A

Avenida Del Sol Drainage Way - A

Summit Detention Basin - D

Summit Drainage Way – A / (from Section 11 (East of Remington Park Subdivision) to South Garden Drainage confluence – C) / (After construction of MUP, future classification between from BST to Avenida Cochise –B)

Summit – South Garden Detention Basin – D

South Garden Detention Basin - D

South Garden Drainage Way – A / (from BST to Avenida Cochise – B)

El Mercado Drainage Way - A

Pueblo Del Sol South - B

Mountain Mesas - C

Country Club Detention Basin - D

Country Club Estates Drainage Way – B (some privately maintained as a golf course)

Garden Canyon Wash – B

This policy does not address erosion issues caused by the natural flow of water. However, erosion concerns that affect the integrity of bridges, storm water structures, and or hinder maintenance operations within (banks and sandy channel bottoms) will be addressed by the City’s Streets and Engineering Divisions on a case-by-case basis. Work for these issues will be considered when planning capital improvement projects, and is beyond the scope of this policy.

The Public Works Department will assess the public interest in all projects or maintenance performed within the boundaries of washes and drainage ways. Maintenance that benefits a significant portion of the community or is conducted to remedy a situation that presents an imminent danger to the general public will hold a higher priority. Work that benefits a sole property owner and does not present imminent danger to the general public will hold a lower priority.

The Public Works Department, in consultation with the Fire Department, will assess wildfire danger in washes. If a wash area appears to be particularly vulnerable, the Streets Division will attempt to maintain “brush truck” access where possible.

VEGETATION REMOVAL

Herbicide chemicals are never used within washes and drainage ways, and there is an emphasis on trying to protect wildlife habitat along the banks of natural drainageways with riparian vegetation. Methods of dead vegetation removal and vegetation that may prevent flow of stormwater, will vary depending on the wash classification. It is noted that in all categories, the banks of the wash are defined as the area between the sandy bottom of the drainage way to the City easement boundary, except in category B. For category B, the bank is defined as the area between the sandy bottom and the park or linear path boundary. The following paragraphs address the types of vegetation removal that will be performed for each category.

CATEGORY A - Maintenance includes the removal of vegetation, debris, and sediment that has accumulated and may impede the flow of water within the sandy bottom of the channel (see attached map and cross sections). The banks and bottom of the wash will be mowed where access is possible. If access is limited, or not possible, weed trimming will be performed. Sediment build-up that threatens to compromise the function of any storm water structure will also be removed.

All dead vegetation, or vegetation that would otherwise cause a safety hazard and/or wildfire hazard, will be removed. Larger healthy vegetation (such as trees) that does not present a safety hazard or obstruction to maintenance equipment or floodwaters will be preserved “as is”. All weeds and/or desert broom are cut down. Plants that may eventually cause damage to a water conveying apparatus will be removed. Maintenance will be performed once per year by the City’s Streets Division for Category A washes.

CATEGORY B - The Streets Division will remove most, if not all, of the vegetation and debris and sediment that has accumulated and may impede the flow of water within the sandy channel bottom of the washes. The banks and bottom of the wash will be mowed, where access is possible. If access is limited, or not possible, weed trimming will be performed. Sediment build-up that threatens to compromise the function of any storm water structure will also be removed.

Dead vegetation in the sandy bottom of the wash will be removed, and larger dead vegetation on the bank will also be removed when it presents a safety, or wildfire hazard. Healthy vegetation on the banks will be preserved as long as it does not present a safety hazard, or obstruction to maintenance equipment.

In order to preserve the natural vegetation around the washes and the park areas of our City, the Streets Division will make a great effort to leave hard wood trees that are 6-inches or greater in diameter. Trimming these trees will also be left to the discretion of the division. Washes in category B will be maintained at least once per year by the City’s Streets Division.

The Parks Division of the Public Works Department will be responsible for the multi-use paths along washes as well as any parks along the washes. Maintenance in these areas are performed seasonally or at least 4 times per year and include mowing, maintenance of irrigation devices, trimming of trees and other tasks involved with keeping the park aesthetically pleasing. Most

vegetation within the parks will involve the maintenance of ornamental plantings and some native vegetation.

Improved multi-use paths will be mowed by the Parks Division to an extent of 8 feet to either side. Un-improved trails will be mowed to an extent of 2 feet to either side. Maintenance at the parks and multi-use paths is often performed following a verified, citizen concern or complaint.

CATEGORY C - Maintenance includes the removal of vegetation, debris, and sediment that has accumulated and may impede the flow of water within the sandy bottom of the channel.

In addition, any sediment build up that threatens to compromise the function of any storm water structure will also be removed.

Very large, dead vegetation that presents a nuisance, wildfire, or safety hazard will be removed. Additionally, any vegetation that may eventually cause structural damage to a storm water conveyance apparatus (i.e. bridge structures, surface or subsurface storm drains, gabion baskets etc....) will be removed.

Within the bank portion of the wash that contains dense, well nourished vegetation, the Streets Division will practice discretion in the removal of bushes and trees in order to preserve riparian areas. The Division will make a great effort to leave most of the natural vegetation. The trimming of trees will also be left to the discretion of the Division. Public Works maintenance will be performed once per year, if needed.

CATEGORY D - The Streets Division will mow the bottom and side slopes of all detention/retention basins within the City limits if accessible. In the case that the slopes are too steep, or covered with concrete or rip-rap, limited weed trimming will be performed.

Dead vegetation and any vegetation that endanger storm-water structures such as outlets or overflow weirs will be removed. In addition, any sediment build-up or vegetation, that threatens to impede the natural flow of detention/retention basin outlet, or emergency overflow structure will also be removed.

Maintenance in basins will not be performed exclusively for aesthetic purposes; however, all work will be conducted with regard to reasonable consideration of aesthetics. Public works will perform maintenance on detention/retention basins once per year.

MOWING OPERATIONS

The Streets Division will perform mowing operations within public right-of-way of Type A and Type B washes or basin within City Limits based on vehicular access. Where access will not allow mowing, some "hand trimming" may be performed to the extent possible. These mowing and weed trimming operations will be conducted (at least once per year) primarily for water conveyance and/or wildfire prevention. Type C washes are left preserved in as natural state as possible.

Because drainage ways and basins are often wet and access is not always available, washes and basins are not subject to City's weed ordinance requirements. The Streets Division will mow at least once a year, usually during the winter time.

DEBRIS REMOVAL

The Streets Division will strive to remove debris and litter from washes basins and drainage ways which may pose a threat to public health and welfare. Debris removal from washes will include tree limbs, loose vegetation, solid waste, illegal dump material, construction debris, tires, and any other object or material that does not belong in an urban wash. Following the months of July and August (monsoon season), the Division will utilize an inspection schedule to check along the washes within the City for debris and sediment that has accumulated during the wet season. If debris is discovered to be causing a blockage, or has the potential to cause a blockage, the Division will mobilize to remove the material soon as possible.

Debris removal will also be performed any time of the year, following a citizen concern or complaint that is received by the City Staff via the internet, letter or phone call. If a citizen notices any unusual flooding or trash dumping activities within City drainage ways the incident should be reported the City of Sierra Vista's Public Works Department.

Debris removal will be performed by the Streets Division at all categories of washes.

ILLEGAL DUMPING AND/OR OTHER ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES

Illegal dumping is defined under the Sierra Vista, Arizona Code of Ordinance, Title IX, Statute 91.11. If illegal dumping activity is discovered to be occurring within the washes and waterways of the City, the Public Works Department will coordinate with the City's Community Development neighborhood officers to locate the responsible party.

The Public Works Division will work to remove the illegal dumping debris as soon as possible to prevent the material from being washed down the drainage way. However, the responsible party (if identified) will be invoiced for cleanup and disposal costs of dumped material.

If during maintenance, the Streets Division finds any evidence to indicate illegal activities are occurring in the drainage corridor (such as arson, illegal hunting, etc...), those employees shall inform the City's Police Department or other local authority.

SEDIMENT REMOVAL

The City's Streets Division will remove sediment accumulation in washes and drainage ways to improve storm water conveyance and decrease the potential for flooding. The Division will however, exercise considerable caution in the removal of sediment, and will not deepen the wash below the natural "bed" or bottom elevation, nor will it widen the wash beyond the natural banks or alter the direction of natural flow.

Removal of sediment will occur on a rotational basis so as not to disturb an extended length of any one wash simultaneously. The Streets Division will choose several locations within the wash to conduct sediment removal. These locations will be separated by a sufficient length of the wash as to not impact one another. The Public Work's goal is to remove accumulated sediment in washes to facilitate drainage while preserving the natural ecological environment of the City's waterways.

ADOPT-A-WASH PROGRAM

The City's Adopt-A-Wash program allows organizations to make a two year commitment and act as environmental stewards by cleaning and caring for washes within the City limits where public right-of-way has been obtained. The City is always seeking volunteer groups interested in this kind of commitment. Once signed up the volunteer group usually conducts a "clean-up" effort twice a year. The Department of Public Works asks that the clean-up effort be scheduled through the Department so that trash bags, safety vests, and identification of collection locations can be arranged. If resources and manpower are available, the Streets Department will make great effort to schedule vegetation removal before the event to provide safe access to the wash. Mowing operations in extremely littered areas will be held off until clean-up is completed in order to avoid shredding trash and spreading debris.

PROPERTY OWNERS RESPONSIBILITES

Whereas the City will follow the aforementioned protocol for maintenance within the right-of-way boundaries of the washes and drainage ways, the property owners will also have maintenance responsibilities adjacent to these areas. Property owners are responsible for vegetation maintenance, erosion problems, debris and litter removal, and other real property maintenance from the property boundary along the wash to the curb line of the adjacent street. The Public Works Department will not be responsible for the care of any plants placed within the drainage way easement by adjacent property owners, and may have to remove plants on City property that pose a nuisance, safety hazard, or may obstruct the flow of flood waters.

No property owner shall deposit in any wash, drainage way, ditch or any other waterway within the City, any rubbish filth, construction debris, litter, garbage, tree cuttings, grass cuttings or poisonous or deleterious substance liable to affect the health, safety and welfare of persons or animals along the waterways.

Property owners are encouraged to maintain the appearance of areas adjacent to waterways by keeping these areas free of debris, high grass and or weeds, and overhanging branches of trees if these appear to become a safety issue or threaten existing structures.

