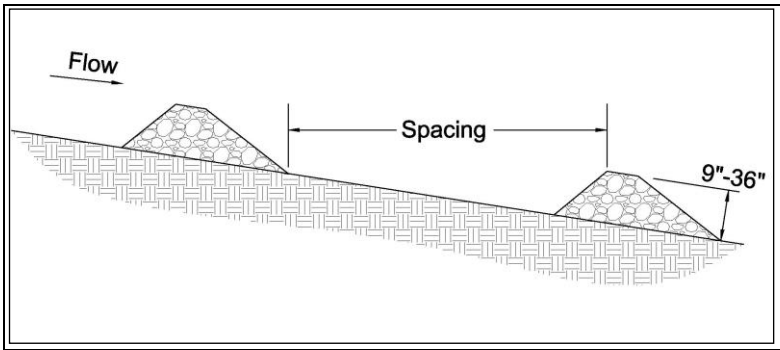
2.0 Erosion Controls

2.1 Check Dam

Erosion Control



Description: Check dams are small barriers consisting of loose rock, rock bags, or organic filter tubes placed across a drainage swale or ditch. They reduce the velocity of small concentrated flows, provide a limited barrier for sediment and reduce the potential for erosion of the swale or ditch.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

DESIGN CRITERIA:

- Heights between 9 inches and 36 inches
- Top of the downstream dam should be at the same elevation as the toe of the upstream dam

ADVANTAGES / BENEFITS:

- Reduced velocities in long drainage swales or ditches
- May be used with other channel protection measures
- Provides some sediment removal

DISADVANTAGES / LIMITATIONS:

- Cannot be used in live stream channels
- Minor ponding upstream of the check dams
- Extensive maintenance or replacement of the dams required after heavy flows or high velocity flows
- Mowing hazard from loose rocks if all rock is not removed at end of construction

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS:

- Inspect regularly
- Remove silt when it reaches approximately ⅓ the height of the dam or 12 inches, whichever is less

TARGETED POLLUTANTS

- ◒ Sediment
- ○ Nutrients & Toxic Materials
- ○ Oil & Grease
- ◒ Floatable Materials
- ○ Other Construction Wastes

APPLICATIONS

Perimeter Control

Slope Protection

Sediment Barrier

Channel Protection

Temporary Stabilization

Final Stabilization

Waste Management

Housekeeping Practices

Fe=0.30-0.50
(*Depends on soil type*)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

- ◒ Capital Costs
- ● Maintenance
- ○ Training
- ◒ Suitability for Slopes > 5%

Other Considerations:

- *None*

2.1.1 Primary Use

Check dams are used in long drainage swales or ditches to reduce erosive velocities. They are typically used in conjunction with other channel protection techniques such as vegetation lining and turf reinforcement mats. Check dams provide limited treatment to sediment-laden flows. They are more useful in reducing flow velocities to acceptable levels for stabilization methods. Check dams may be used in combination with stone outlet sediment traps, where the check dams prevent erosion of the swale while the sediment trap captures sediment at the downstream end of the swale.

2.1.2 Applications

Check dams are typically used in swales and drainage ditches along linear projects such as roadways. They can also be used in short swales down a steep slope, such as swales down a highway embankment, to reduce velocities. Check dams shall not be used in live stream channels.

Check dams should be installed before the contributing drainage area is disturbed, so as to mitigate the effects on the swale from the increase in runoff. If the swale itself is graded as part of the construction activities, check dams are installed immediately upon completion of grading to control velocities in the swale until stabilization is completed.

2.1.3 Design Criteria

General Criteria

- Typically, the dam height should be between 9 inches and 36 inches, depending on the material of which they are made. The height of the check dam shall always be less than one-third the depth of the channel.
- Dams should be spaced such that the top of the downstream dam is at the same elevation as the toe of the upstream dam. On channel grades flatter than 0.4 percent, check dams should be placed at a distance that allows small pools to form between each check dam.
- The top of the side of the check dam shall be a minimum of 12 inches higher than the middle of the dam. In addition, the side of the dams shall be embedded a minimum of 18 inches into the side of the drainage ditch, swale or channel to minimize the potential for flows to erode around the side of the dam.
- Larger flows (greater than 2-year, 24-hour design storm) must pass the check dam without causing excessive upstream flooding.
- Check dams should be used in conjunction with other sediment reduction techniques prior to releasing flow offsite.
- Use geotextile filter fabric under check dams of 12 inches in height or greater. The fabric shall meet the following minimum criteria:
    - Tensile Strength, ASTM D4632 Test Method for Grab Breaking Load and Elongation of Geotextiles, 250-lbs.
    - Puncture Rating, ASTM D4833 Test Method for Index Puncture Resistance of Geotextiles, Geomembranes, and Related Products, 135-lbs.
    - Mullen Burst Rating, ASTM D3786 Standard Test Method for Hydraulic Bursting Strength of Textile Fabrics-Diaphragm Bursting Strength Tester Method, 420-psi.
    - Apparent Opening Size, ASTM D4751 Test Method for Determining Apparent Opening Size of a Geotextile, U.S. Sieve No. 20 (max).
- Loose, unconfined soil, wood chips, compost, and other material that can float or be transported by runoff shall not be used to construct check dams.

Rock Check Dams

- Stone shall be well graded with stone size ranging from 3 to 6 inches in diameter for a check dam height of 24 inches or less. The stone size range for check dams greater than 24 inches is 4 to 8 inches in diameter.
- Rock check dams shall have a minimum top width of 2 feet with side slopes of 2:1 or flatter.

Rock Bag Check Dams

- Rock bag check dams should have a minimum top width of 16 inches.
- Bag length shall be 24 inches to 30 inches, width shall be 16 inches to 18 inches and thickness shall be 6 inches to 8 inches and having a minimum weight of 40 pounds.
- Minimum rock bag dam height of 12 inches would consist of one row of bags stacked on top of two rows of bag. The dam shall always be one more row wide than it is high, stacked pyramid fashion.
- Bags should be filled with pea gravel, filter stone, or aggregate that is clean and free of deleterious material.
- Sand bags shall not be used for check dams, due to their propensity to break and release sand that is transported by the concentrated flow in the drainage swale or ditch.
- Bag material shall be polypropylene, polyethylene, polyamide or cotton burlap woven fabric, minimum unit weight 4-ounces-per-square-yard, Mullen burst strength exceeding 300-psi as determined by ASTM D3786, Standard Test Method for Hydraulic Bursting Strength of Textile Fabrics-Diaphragm Bursting Strength Tester Method, and ultraviolet stability exceeding 70 percent.
- PVC pipes may be installed through the dam to allow for controlled flow through the dam. Pipe should be schedule 40 or heavier polyvinyl chloride (PVC) having a nominal internal diameter of 2 inches.

Sack Gabion Check Dams

- Sack gabion check dams may be used in channels with a contributing drainage area of 5 acres or less.
- Sack gabions shall be wrapped in galvanized steel, woven wire mesh. The wire shall be 20 gauge with 1 inch diameter, hexagonal openings.
- Wire mesh shall be one piece, wrapped around the rock, and secured to itself on the downstream side using wire ties or hog rings.
- Sack gabions shall be staked with ¾ inch rebar at a maximum spacing of three feet. Each wire sack shall have a minimum of two stakes.
- Stone shall be well graded with a minimum size range from 3 to 6 inches in diameter.

Organic Filter Tube Check Dams

- Organic filter tubes may be used as check dams in channels with a contributing drainage area of 5 acres or less.
- Organic filter tubes shall be a minimum of 12 inches in diameter.
- Filter material used within tubes to construct check dams shall be limited to coir, straw, aspen fiber and other organic material with high cellulose content. The material should be slow to decay or leach nutrients in standing water.
- Staking of filter tubes shall be at a maximum of 4 foot spacing and shall alternate through the tube and on the downstream face of the tube.
- Unless superseded by requirements in this section, filter tubes and filter material shall comply with the

criteria in *Section 3.6 Organic Filter Tubes*.

2.1.4 Design Guidance and Specifications

Specifications for construction of this item may be found in the Standard Specifications for Public Works Construction – North Central Texas Council of Governments, Section 201.9 Check Dam (Rock). Specifications are also available in the Standard Specifications for Construction and Maintenance of Highways, Streets, and Bridges (TxDOT 2004), Item 506.2.A and Item 506.4.C.1.

2.1.5 Inspection and Maintenance Requirements

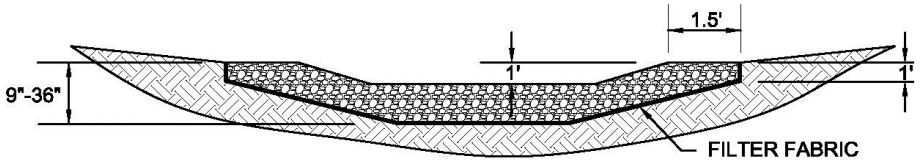
Check dams should be inspected regularly (at least as often as required by the TPDES Construction General Permit). Silt must be removed when it reaches approximately 1/3 the height of the dam or 12 inches, whichever is less. Inspectors should monitor the edges of the dam where it meets the sides of the drainage ditch, swale or channel for evidence of erosion due to bypass or high flows. Eroded areas shall be repaired. If erosion continues to be a problem, modifications to the check dam or additional controls are needed.

Care must be used when taking out rock check dams in order to remove as much rock as possible. Loose rock can create an extreme hazard during mowing operations once the area has been stabilized.

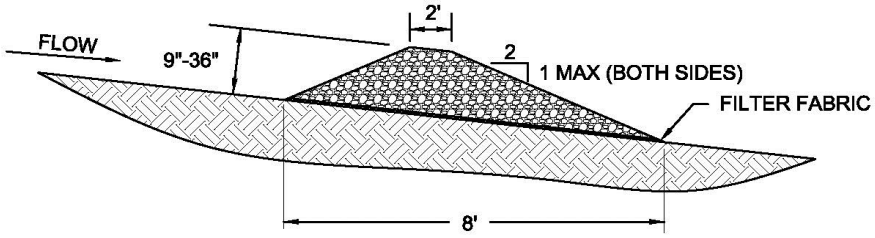
2.1.6 Example Schematics

The following schematics are example applications of the construction control. They are intended to assist in understanding the control's design and function.

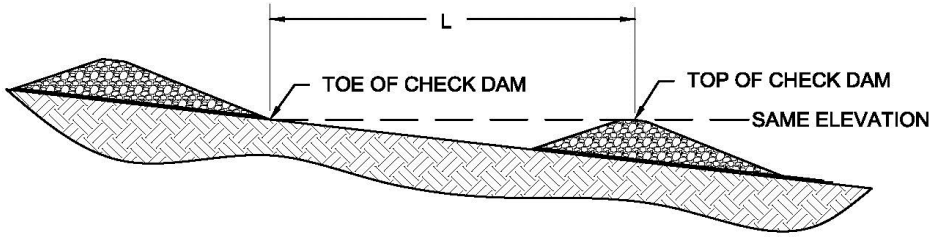
The schematics are **not for construction**. They may serve as a starting point for creating a construction detail, but they must be adapted for the site by the designer. Dimensions and notes appropriate for the application must also be added by the designer.



ROCK CHECK DAM VIEW LOOKING UPSTREAM
N.T.S.



CROSS SECTION OF ROCK CHECK DAM
N.T.S.

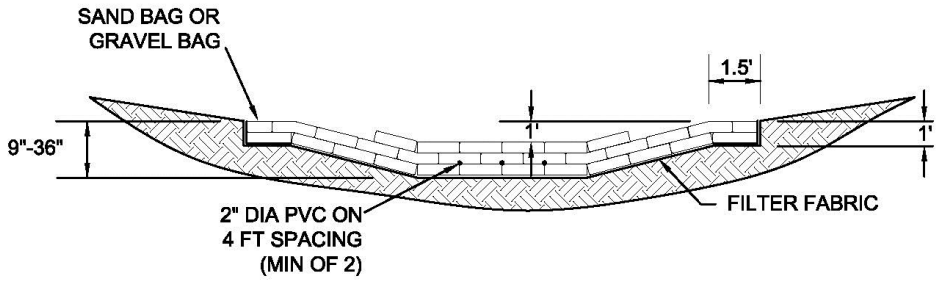


SPACING BETWEEN ROCK CHECK DAMS
N.T.S.

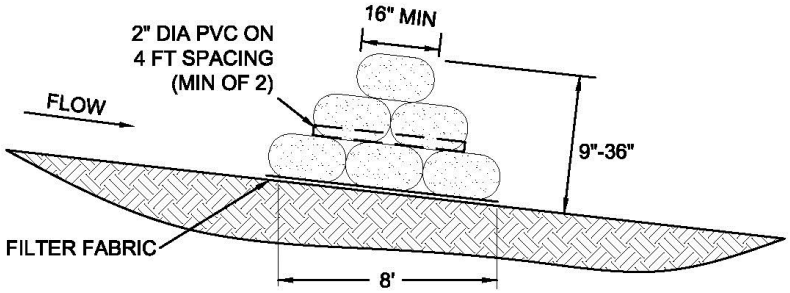
NOTES: ACTUAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CHECK DAMS SHALL BE DESIGNED BASED ON FLOW CONDITIONS IN THE DRAINAGE SWALE OR DITCH. PROVIDE CALCULATIONS THAT DOCUMENT THE FOLLOWING PARAMETERS USED TO DESIGN THE CHECK DAMS.

- HEIGHT OF CHECK DAMS BASED ON SWALE OR DITCH DIMENSIONS AND FLOW CONDITIONS.
- SPACING OF CHECK DAMS BASED ON GRADE OF THE SWALE OR DITCH. TOP OF DOWNSTREAM DAM SHALL BE AT SAME ELEVATION AS TOE OF UPSTREAM DAM

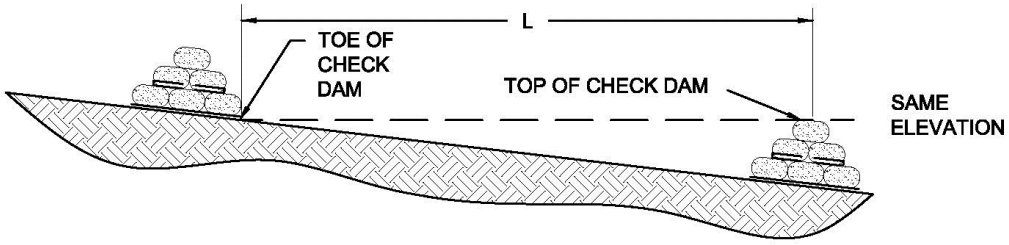
Figure 2.1 Schematics of Rock Check Dams
(Source: Modified from Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington)



ROCK BAG CHECK DAM VIEW LOOKING UPSTREAM
N.T.S.



CROSS SECTION OF ROCK BAG CHECK DAM
N.T.S.



SPACING BETWEEN ROCK BAG CHECK DAMS
N.T.S.

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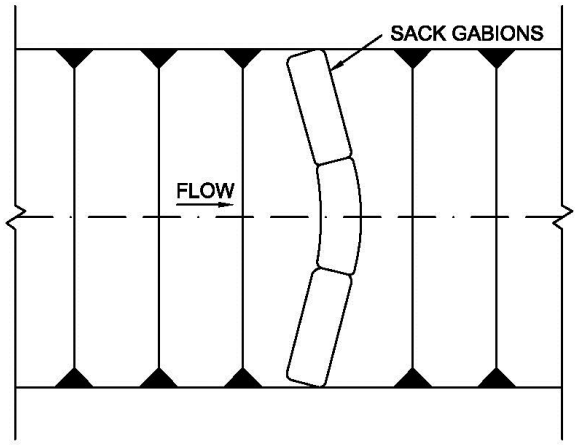
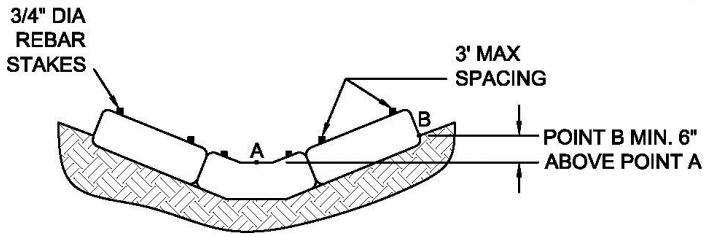
- SPACING OF CHECK DAMS BASED ON GRADE OF THE SWALE OR DITCH. TOP OF DOWNSTREAM DAM SHALL BE AT SAME ELEVATION AS TOE OF UPSTREAM DAM.

Figure 2.2 Schematics of Rock Bag Check Dams



SACK GABION CHECK DAM PLAN VIEW
N.T.S.



SACK GABION CHECK DAM VIEW LOOKING UPSTREAM
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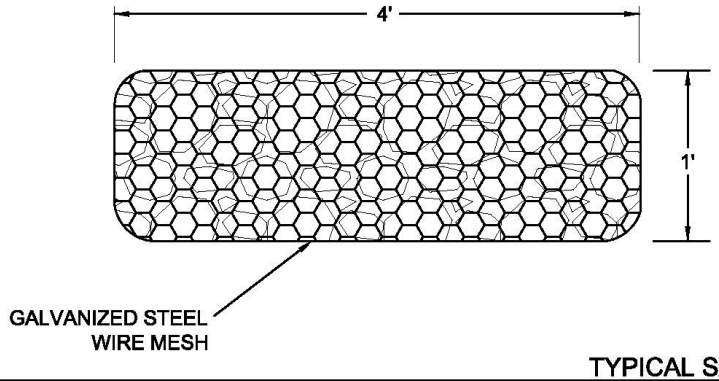

TYPICAL SACK GABION
N.T.S.

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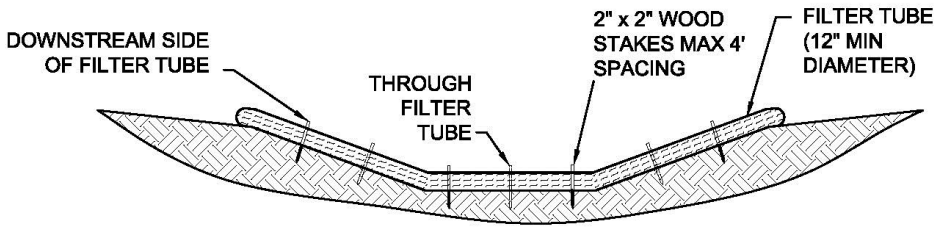
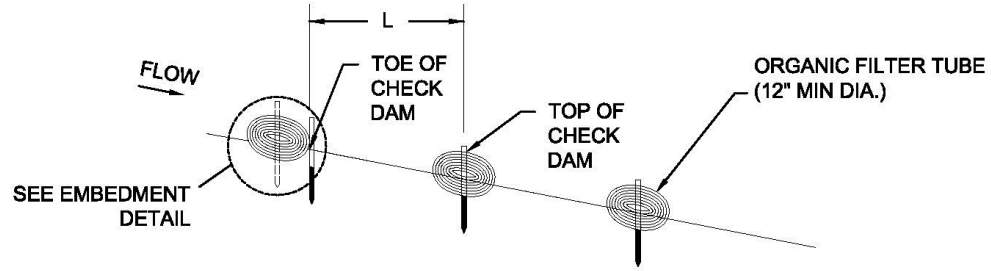
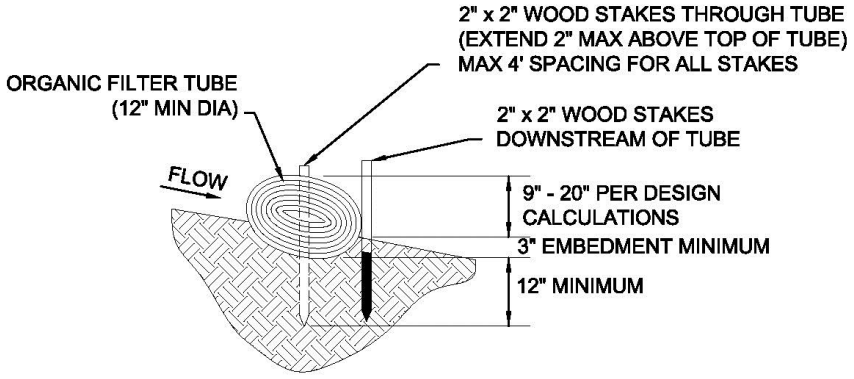
Figure 2.3 Schematics of Sack Gabion Check Dams
(Source: Modified from Texas Department of Transportation Detail Sheet EC (2)-93)



ORGANIC FILTER TUBE CHECK DAM VIEW LOOKING UPSTREAM
N.T.S.



ORGANIC FILTER TUBE CHECK DAM PROFILE
N.T.S.



EMBEDMENT DETAIL FOR ORGANIC FILTER TUBE CHECK DAM
N.T.S.

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Figure 2.4 Schematics of Organic Filter Tube Check Dams
(Source: Modified from City of Plano BMP S-7)