

Erosion and Sediment Control: Can We See the Forest for the Trees?

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We all believe that stream restoration is a good thing -- we are identifying and fixing impacted natural systems. I believe that our current fixation on erosion and sediment control, and preventing any increase in suspended sediment during restoration construction, is unnecessarily hampering our ability to restore streams. We cannot see the forest (restoring streams) for the trees (keeping sediment out of streams).

This paper offers a number of suggestions for regulators, designers, contractors and owners on how to help us stay focused on the long-term objective of restoring streams.

- With respect to regulators, the following concepts will be explored: training; sediment already in the river; location of required offsetting; fish windows; delegated authority; cost of stream restoration projects; and, habitat banking.
- With respect to designers, the following concepts will be explored: training; erosion and sediment control plans; reducing earthwork; and, materials for construction.
- With respect to contractors, the following concepts will be explored: training; equipment; speed of construction; and, in-water work versus isolation.
- With respect to owners, the following will be explored: selecting a good designer; selecting a good contractor; design-build project delivery; and, timing.

Regulators, contractors and designers need to work together to find better and more cost-effective ways to restore streams. We need to challenge the conventional wisdom. There are many streams that are in desperate need of restoration.