STANDARD FOR LAND GRADING

Definition

Reshaping the ground surface by grading to planned elevations which are determined by topographic survey and layout.

Purpose

The practice is for one or more of the following: Provide more suitable sites for land development; improve surface drainage and control erosion.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

This practice is applicable where grading to planned elevations is practical and it is determined that grading is needed. Grading that involves the disturbance of vegetation over large areas shall be avoided. It may be necessary to provide for temporary stabilization of large areas.

Water Quality Enhancement

Proper grading of disturbed sites will protect against soil loss from erosion, enhance establishment of permanent vegetative cover and help to properly manage stormwater runoff all of which will reduce off site discharge of pollutants.

Planning Criteria

The grading plan and installation shall be based upon adequate topographic surveys and investigations. The plan is to show the location, slope, cut, fill and finish elevation of the surfaces to be graded. The plan should also include auxiliary practices for safe disposal of runoff water, slope stabilization, erosion control and drainage. Facilities such as waterways, ditches, diversions, grade stabilization structures, retaining walls and subsurface drains should be included where necessary.

Erosion control measures shall be designed and installed in accordance with the applicable standard contained herein.

The development and establishment of the plan shall include the following:

1. The cut face of earth excavations and fills shall be no steeper than the safe angle of repose for the materials encountered and flat enough for proper maintenance.

2. The permanently exposed faces of earth cuts and fills shall be vegetated or otherwise protected from erosion.

3. Provisions shall be made to safely conduct surface water to storm drains or suitable water courses and to prevent surface runoff from damaging cut faces and fill slopes.

4. Subsurface drainage is to be provided in areas having a high water table, to intercept seepage that would adversely affect slope stability, building foundations or create undesirable wetness. See Standard for Subsurface Drainage, pg. 32-1.

5. Adjoining property shall be protected from excavation and filling operations.

6. Fill shall not be placed adjacent to the bank of a stream or channel, unless provisions are made to protect the

hydraulic, biological, aesthetic and other environmental functions of the stream.

Soil Management and Preparation

Subgrade soils prior to the application of topsoil shall be free of excessive compaction to a depth of 6.0 inches to enhance the establishment of permanent vegetative cover.

This section of this Standard addresses the potential for excessive soil compaction in light of the intended land use, testing for excessive soil compaction where permanent vegetation is to be established and mitigation of excessive soil compaction when appropriate.

Due to use or setting, certain disturbed areas will not require compaction remediation including, but not limited to the following:

1. Within 20 feet of building foundations with basements, 12 feet from slab or crawl space construction.
2. Where soils or gravel surfaces will be required to support post-construction vehicular traffic loads such as roads, parking lots and driveways (including gravel surfaces), bicycle paths or pedestrian walkways (sidewalks etc)
3. Airports, railways or other transportation facilities
4. Areas requiring industry or government specified soil designs, including golf courses, landfills, wetland restoration, septic disposal fields, wet/lined ponds, etc.
5. Areas governed or regulated by other local, state or federal regulations which dictate soil conditions
6. Brownfields (capped uses), urban redevelopment areas, , in-fill areas, , recycling yards, junk yards, quarries and
7. Slopes determined to be inappropriate for safe operation of equipment
8. Portions of a site where no heavy equipment travel or other disturbance has taken place
9. Areas receiving temporary vegetative stabilization in accordance with the Standard.
10. Where the area available for remediation practices is 500 square feet or less in size.
11. Locations containing shallow (close to the surface) bedrock conditions.

Areas of the site which are subject to compaction testing and/or mitigation shall be graphically denoted on the certified soil erosion control plan.

Soil compaction remediation or testing to prove remediation is not necessary will be required in areas where permanent vegetation is to be established that are not otherwise exempted above. Testing method shall be selected, and soil compaction testing shall be performed by, the contractor or other project owner's representative (e.g. engineer). A minimum of two (2) tests shall be performed for projects with an overall limit of disturbance of up to one (1) acre and at a rate of two (2) tests per acre of the overall limit of disturbance for larger areas which shall be evenly distributed over the area of disturbance subject to testing. Tests shall be performed in areas representative of the construction activity prevailing in the area. In the event this testing indicates compaction in excess of the maximum thresholds indicated for the testing method, the contractor/owner shall have the option to perform compaction mitigation over the entire disturbed area (excluding exempt areas) or to perform additional testing to establish the limits of excessive compaction whereupon only the excessively compacted areas would require compaction mitigation.

Soil compaction testing is not required if/when subsoil compaction remediation (scarification/tillage (6" minimum depth) or similar) is proposed as part of the sequence of construction.

Soil Test Method Options

1. Probing Wire Test Method

   This test shall be conducted with a firm wire (15-1/2 gauge steel wire - e.g. survey marker flag, straight wire stock, etc.), 18 to 21 inches in length, with 6" inches from one end visibly marked on the wire. Conduct wire flag test by holding the wire flag near the flag end and push it vertically into the soil at several different locations in the field to the lesser of a 6 inch depth or the depth at which it bends due to resistance in the soil. Record the depth at which it bends due to resistance in the soil. The wire should penetrate without bending or deforming at least 6" into the ground by hand, without the use of tools. If penetration fails and an obstruction is suspected (rocks, root, debris, etc.) the test can be repeated in the same general area. If the test is successful the soil is not excessively compacted. If the wire is difficult to insert (wire bends or deforms prior to reaching 6 inches in depth) the soil may be excessively compacted and compaction mitigation or further testing via method 3 or 4 below is required, the choice of which is at the contractor/owner's discretion.

2. Handheld Soil Penetrometer Test Method

   This test shall be conducted based on the Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) #RCE2010-001, prepared by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Implemented June 1, 2010, last revised February 28, 2011. A result of less than or equal to 300 psi shall be considered passing. If the result is greater than 300 psi the soil may be excessively compacted and compaction mitigation or further testing via method 3 or 4 below is required, the choice of which is at the contractor/owner's discretion.

3. Tube Bulk Density Test Method

   This test shall be certified by a New Jersey Licensed Professional Engineer utilizing only undisturbed samples (reconstitution of the sample not permitted) collected utilizing the procedure for Soil Bulk Density Tests as described in the USDA NRCS Soil Quality Test Kit Guide, Section 1-4, July 2001. When the texture of the soil to be tested is a sand or loamy sand and lack of soil cohesion or the presence of large amounts of coarse fragments, roots or worm channels prevent the taking of undisturbed samples, this test shall not be used.

   Where the results of replicate tests differ by more than ten percent (10%), the samples shall be examined for the following defects:

   i. Cracks, worm channels, large root channels or poor soil tube contact within the samples;
   ii. Large pieces of gravel, roots or other foreign objects
   iii. Smearing or compaction of the upper or lower surface of the samples

   If any of the defects described in 3 (i-iii) above are found, the defective core(s) shall be discarded and the test repeated using a new replicate sample for each defective replicate sample. The bulk density (defined as the weight of dry soil per volume) results shall be compared with the Maximum Dry Bulk Densities in Table 19-1. A result of less than or equal to the applicable maximum bulk density shall be considered passing. If the result is greater than the maximum bulk density the soil shall be considered excessively compacted and compaction mitigation is required.

4. Nuclear Density Test Method

   This test shall be certified by a New Jersey Licensed Professional Engineer and conducted by a nuclear gauge certified inspector pursuant to ASTM D6938 . The bulk density measurement results shall be compared with the Maximum Dry Bulk Densities in Table 19-1. A result of less than or equal to the applicable maximum bulk density shall be considered passing. If the result is greater than the maximum bulk density the soil shall be considered excessively compacted and compaction mitigation is required.

Table 19-1 – Maximum Dry Bulk Densities (grams/cubic centimeter) by soil type

Soil Type/Texture	Bulk Density (g/cc)
Coarse, Medium and Fine Sands and Loamy Sands	1.80
Very Fine Sand and Loamy Very Fine Sand	1.77
Sandy Loam	1.75
Loam, Sandy Clay Loam	1.70
Clay Loam	1.65
Sandy Clay	1.60
Silt, Silt Loam	1.55
Silty Clay Loam	1.50
Silty Clay	1.45
Clay	1.40

Source: USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, Soil Quality Information Sheet, Soil Quality Resource Concerns: Compaction, April 1996

5. Additional testing methods which comform to ASTM standards and pecificaitons, and which produce a dry weight, soil bulk density measurement may be allowed subject to District approval.

Procedures for Soil Compaction Mitigation

If subgrade soils are determined to be excessively compacted by testing, as identified above, procedures shall be used to mitigate excessive soil compaction prior to placement of topsoil and establishment of permanent vegetative cover. Restoration of compacted soils shall be through deep scarification/tillage (6" minimum depth) where there is no danger to underground utilities (cables, irrigation systems, etc.) or in the alternative, another method as specified by a New Jersey Licensed Professional Engineer.

Installation Requirements

Timber, logs, brush, rubbish, rocks, stumps and vegetative matter which will interfere with the grading operation or affect the planned stability or fill areas shall be removed and disposed of according to the plan.

Topsoil is to be stripped and stockpiled in amounts necessary to complete finish grading of all exposed areas requiring topsoil. See Standard for Topsoiling, pg. 8-1.

Fill material is to be free of brush, rubbish, timber, logs, vegetative matter and stumps in amounts that will be detrimental to constructing stable fills.

All structural fills shall be compacted as determined by structural engineering requirements for their intended purpose and as required to reduce slipping, erosion or excessive saturation.

All disturbed areas shall be left with a neat and finished appearance and shall be protected from erosion. See Standards for Permanent Vegetative Cover for Soil Stabilization, pg. 4-1.

Trees to be retained shall be protected if necessary in accordance with the Standard for Tree Protection During Construction, pg. 9-1.