Guidance on Turbidity Monitoring Bulletin

Applicability: Turbidity monitoring is required by several different permits when working in or near water bodies. The type and frequency of turbidity monitoring is dependent on the type of permit, specific conditions, and the nature of work such as wetland fill/removal, in-stream work to replace culverts, construction work when storm water can enter water bodies.

Activities/Permits Requiring Turbidity Monitoring:

NPDES-General Construction Permit (1200-CA)
Construction activities that disturb one or more acres of land are required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), General Construction Permit (1200-CA). The permit requires monitoring for turbidity specifically when the discharge is to a water quality limited stream.

Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 401 Water Quality Certification issued for CWA 404/Oregon-Department of State Lands Removal/Fill Permit
Activities occurring in wetlands or other waters of the state/US may trigger a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) or from the Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL). Water quality conditions or, for Corps permits, a 401-Water Quality Certification, intended to protect the beneficial uses of water bodies typically require monitoring to ensure that water quality standards for turbidity are met.

Basis for Technical Bulletin GE09-03(B):

Any projects that trigger the need for a Corps permit, either the Nationwide (NWP) permit or an individual permit, is required to monitor for turbidity to comply with the conditions of the 401 Certification.

Requirements for monitoring, and documenting turbidity were derived from the 404 permit language and adopted into the ODOT's Turbidity Monitoring Report for staff use. The form can be downloaded or viewed at the following link (https://www.oregon.gov/ODOT/Forms/2ODOT/7342755.pdf). The report should be used for monitoring, documenting and reporting of turbidity at all ODOT project sites covered by the Corps -Nationwide 404 permit.

Note: The form may be modified and used to comply with turbidity monitoring and reporting required by other permits. You may require concurrence or approval from the respective regulatory authority.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Q: Do I have to a use turbidity meter at every project where turbidity monitoring is required?

A: No, you are not required to use a turbidity meter for turbidity monitoring unless otherwise specified or required by a permit condition.
Note: Projects covered by US-Corps Nationwide permits with pre-certified 401 certifications to use turbidity meters. Projects with Individual permits may have 401 conditions requiring the use of a meter. NPDES 1200-CA permits allow visual monitoring.

Q: Do I have to use the ODOT turbidity monitoring form for documenting my turbidity readings?

A: Yes, you are required to use the ODOT turbidity monitoring form to document visual observations and measurements.

Q: Can I continue visual observations and document observations in the new form?

A: Yes, it is absolutely fine to continue with visual monitoring unless specified in a permit or condition of a permit or a requirement agreed upon. Make sure to record your observations and your resultant BMP modifications in the new form.

Q: When am I required to monitor for turbidity with a turbidity meter?

A: You are required to use a turbidity meter when required by a permit or conditions of a permit or as determined by the Project Manager or Project Engineer.

Q: Does ODOT have turbidity meters?

A: Each Region should purchase turbidity meters depending on Region needs. Project Managers and Project Engineers should decide on the number of turbidity meters required for each Region. If you need guidance/assistance purchasing turbidity meters, please contact your Regional Environmental Coordinators or Geo-Environmental staff (Raghu Namburi).

Q: Can we assign turbidity monitoring responsibility to the contractor and put this requirement in the contract?

A: Yes. Turbidity monitoring can be included in the contractor's contract. When required it is important to stipulate in the contract that turbidity monitoring with a turbidity meter must be done by a trained person and that the meter must be calibrated as per the manufacturer's instructions.

Q: Is there a training class that covers the use and calibration of turbidity monitoring equipment?

A: ODOT does not have any training classes for turbidity monitoring at this time. However, a class may be offered in the future if a survey of regional staff indicates significant interest.

Q: Do we have Standard Specification language to be included in the contract documents?

A: We have new Boiler Plate Specification language to be included in contract documents on projects with in-stream work permits.

Q: Who should I contact if I have more questions about this issue?

A: Raghu Namburi, ODOT-Erosion Control Program Coordinator,
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