

# How Does Excess Sediment (Dirt) Affect the River?

## River Habitat

Some amount of turbidity is natural in streams, and the amount varies from stream to stream, depending on the landscape and underlying geology, but excessive sediment (dirt) is bad and causes the following:

Dirt coats rocks, gravels and sand, making it hard for the macro-invertebrates to attach.

Dirt fills the interstices in gravel in the stream, destroying critter habitat and fish spawning areas.

Dirt damages the gills of many aquatic critters.

Dirt clouds the water, making it hard for the organisms to see prey or predators.



## Water Temperature

Dirt raises the temperature of the water.

Suspended particles can absorb more heat from the sun which increases water temperature.

Higher temperatures lead to lower concentrations of dissolved oxygen.



## Water for Our Use

Dirt is the biggest river pollutant. It is expensive to clean out of the water we use for drinking and industrial purposes.

## How Do Sediments Get in the River?

Construction projects can lead to dirt running off in rainstorms.



Mowed stream edges let more sediments through in rain storms.



Plastic baffles keep eroding dirt from running off the construction site.



## How Can People Keep Sediments Out of the River?

- Install erosion barriers at construction sites.
- Reduce runoff by means of rain gardens, retention ponds.
- Keep healthy strips of vegetation alongside the stream. Don't mow to stream edges.
- Plant trees and bushes on unstable stream edges.
- Reduce the amount of impervious surface (concrete, asphalt) in the watershed.