

SOUTHEAST METRO STORMWATER AUTHORITY
acting by and through
SEMSWA WATER ACTIVITY ENTERPRISE

RESOLUTION 26-19
Approval of Vegetation Management Policy

WHEREAS, SEMSWA is responsible for the operation and maintenance of stormwater infrastructure, including channels, floodplains, drainageways, and stormwater facilities within its service area; and

WHEREAS, proper vegetation management is necessary to maintain stormwater conveyance capacity, reduce flood risk, protect public safety, and support compliance with regulatory requirements; and

WHEREAS, SEMSWA conducts routine and non-routine vegetation management activities as part of its maintenance program to address debris accumulation, invasive species, vegetation encroachment, and other conditions that may impact system performance; and

WHEREAS, vegetation management activities must balance stormwater function, environmental stewardship, and coordination with local governments and partner agencies; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary to establish clear and consistent guidance for vegetation management practices, inspection, prioritization, and response.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

1. The Board adopts the attached Vegetation Management Policy.
2. SEMSWA vegetation management activities shall support stormwater conveyance, flood risk reduction, public safety, regulatory compliance, and environmental stewardship.
3. Vegetation management shall be implemented through SEMSWA's routine and contract maintenance programs with prioritization based on severity and risk.
4. SEMSWA shall coordinate with member jurisdictions and partner agencies.
5. The Executive Director is authorized to implement this policy.

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Date: June 17, 2026

ATTEST:

Secretary

Chairperson

APPROVED AS TO FORM:
Attorney for
Southeast Metro Stormwater Authority

By _____
Edward J. Krisor

Southeast Metro Stormwater Authority (SEMSWA)

Vegetation Management Policy

Purpose

This Vegetation Management Plan provides operational guidance for routine and non-routine vegetation management activities conducted by Southeast Metro Stormwater Authority (SEMSWA) within its service area. The plan supports SEMSWA's responsibility to operate and maintain stormwater infrastructure in a safe, functional, and regulatory-compliant manner. Vegetation management activities described herein are intended to preserve stormwater conveyance capacity, protect public safety, reduce stormwater and flood risk, and support compliance with applicable requirements, while minimizing adverse environmental impacts.

Goals and Objectives

SEMSWA vegetation management program is guided by the following objectives:

- Maintain and enhance stormwater conveyance capacity within streams, floodplains, drainageways, and stormwater facilities.
- Reduce soil and streambank erosion caused by stormwater runoff.
- Protect water quality and support flood attenuation.
- Promote healthy native vegetation communities.
- Control and reduce invasive, non-native plant species.
- Reduce wildfire fuel loads where appropriate and consistent with stormwater and flood risk management.
- Support diverse wildlife habitats.
- Coordinate vegetation management activities with local governments and other partners.

Importance of Native Vegetation

Healthy native vegetation plays a critical role in stabilizing floodplains, streams, and drainageways that convey floodwater through communities. Native grasses, shrubs, and trees anchor soil with extensive root systems, reducing erosion during both small and large storm events. Native vegetation also provides essential ecological and community benefits, including Improved water quality through filtration and sediment control, reduced erosion and stabilized streambanks, attenuation of flood flows, habitat for pollinators, songbirds, amphibians, fish, and other wildlife.

Management Area

This plan applies to Southeast Metro Stormwater owned or maintained channels, floodplains, drainageways, and easements within SEMSWA service area.

For SEMSWA Owned properties, SEMSWA may do additional vegetation management to stay compliant with regulations and reduce liability.

Vegetation Management Practices

Vegetation management activities are implemented as part of SEMSWA's routine and contract maintenance programs. Practices are selected based on facility type, hydraulic function, vegetation condition, public safety considerations, and regulatory requirements. SEMSWA implements a variety of vegetation management practices, including:

Debris and Trash Removal

- Remove trash, litter, and accumulated woody debris that obstruct stormwater conveyance or interfere with facility operation.
- Prioritize removal activities at inlets, outlets, low-flow channels, and other critical hydraulic features.
- Conduct debris removal in a manner that minimizes disturbance to stabilized soils and adjacent vegetation.

Weed Management

- Identification and control of invasive, non-native plant species in accordance with State and local regulations.
 - Main resource is:
 - <https://ag.colorado.gov/conservation/noxious-weeds/colorado-noxious-weed-list>
- Use of selective herbicide applications where appropriate
- Strategic mowing to suppress invasive weeds and prevent seed spread in accordance with local regulations.
- Practices are designed to protect native vegetation and minimize disturbance.

Tree and Shrub Management

- Selective thinning of trees and shrubs to maintain stormwater conveyance capacity within the immediate channel or easement areas.
- Removal of trees that pose specific flood hazards or public safety risks.
- Retention of healthy native trees and shrubs where they support ecological and hydraulic functions.

Strategic and Buffer Mowing

- Limited, targeted mowing to support healthy native vegetation.
- Buffer mowing along residential property lines on certain SEMSWA Routine Maintenance Areas, right of way along SEMSWA owned properties, and SEMSWA maintenance only trails, but this does not include any mowing along any public or private trails or sidewalks that do not meet the previously stated criteria above.
- SEMSWA does not do any mowing or weed control on Open Space or Park owned properties unless otherwise agreed upon in a separate agreement, such as, but not limited to an Intergovernmental Agreement, Joint Operations Agreement, or Specific Project agreement.
- Utilize mowing practices that reduce standing dead vegetation while maintaining soil moisture and ecological benefits.

Fire Fuel Mitigation

Many Southeast Metro Stormwater vegetation management practices are consistent with wildfire mitigation objectives. Fire fuel mitigation considerations such as reducing excess woody material within riparian corridors to lower fire fuel loads, reducing invasive weeds that contribute to fire risk, supporting native vegetation communities that retain soil moisture and reduce fire intensity.

Southeast Metro Stormwater's primary focus remains stormwater and flood risk reduction; wildfire mitigation measures are implemented in coordination with local governments and generally are consistent with flood management objectives.

1. Environmental Stewardship

SEMSWA strives to balance public safety, flood risk reduction, and environmental stewardship by preserving riparian vegetation where feasible, minimizing disturbance to soils and habitats, supporting biodiversity and ecological resilience, and applying best management practices based on current applicable guidance or regulations.

2. Inspection, Monitoring, and Adaptive Management

2.1 Inspection Frequencies

Vegetation conditions within SEMSWA maintained facilities are evaluated through routine and non-routine inspections conducted as part of the Maintenance program. Inspection frequencies may vary based on facility type, risk, and site-specific conditions, and generally include:

- **Routine Inspections:** For Routine Maintenance Areas, SEMSWA inspects every quarter and schedules maintenance as needed. For all other drainage areas, inspections are complaint based, but SEMSWA attempts to inspect each major drainageway once a year. SEMSWA will assess vegetation conditions, obstructions, invasive species presence, and public safety concerns.

- **High-Risk or Priority Facilities:** Inspected more frequently, as determined by hydraulic importance, history of flooding, proximity to infrastructure or development, or known vegetation issues.

- **Post-Storm Inspections:** Conducted following significant storm events to identify debris accumulation, erosion, damaged vegetation, or blockages affecting system performance. These are generally complaint based on SEMSWA maintained detention and water quality facilities.

- **Complaint- or Request-Based Inspections:** Conducted in response to reports from member jurisdictions, SEMSWA staff, or the public.

2.2 Trigger Conditions and Severity Thresholds for Maintenance Activities

Vegetation management activities may be initiated when one or more of the following conditions are observed. Severity thresholds are used to prioritize response actions and allocate resources consistent with SEMSWA's Operations and Maintenance practices.

Low Severity (Routine Maintenance) - Minor vegetation encroachment into the flow path with no measurable reduction in stormwater conveyance capacity. - Isolated invasive or noxious weeds present at low density. - Limited debris accumulation that does not impede flow or access. - Vegetation growth that minimally affects visibility or inspection access.

Moderate Severity (Scheduled Maintenance) - Partial obstruction of stormwater conveyance capacity due to vegetation, woody debris, or accumulated plant material. - Vegetation encroachment that reduces hydraulic efficiency or access for inspection and maintenance activities. - Invasive or noxious weeds present at moderate density with potential to spread if untreated. - Standing dead vegetation that increases localized stormwater or wildfire risk.

High Severity (Priority or Corrective Maintenance) - Full or near-full obstruction of stormwater conveyance features, including channels, culverts, inlets, outlets, or low-flow sections. - Vegetation or trees posing an immediate public safety hazard or imminent risk to stormwater infrastructure. - Significant debris jams or woody material that could redirect flows or cause upstream flooding or stream erosion. - Conditions contributing to repeated flooding, erosion, or infrastructure damage.

Severity classifications are used to determine response timing, coordination needs with member jurisdictions, and the appropriate level of maintenance action.

2.2.1 Response Timeframes

The following response timeframes provide general guidance for initiating vegetation management activities based on observed severity. Actual response timing may be adjusted based on site-specific conditions, budgets, weather, resource availability, and coordination requirements.

Severity Level	Typical Condition	Target Response Time
Low Severity (Routine)	Minor encroachment or low-density issues with no impact to conveyance or safety	Addressed during the next routine or annual maintenance cycle
Moderate Severity (Scheduled)	Partial obstruction, reduced access, or moderate invasive species presence	Scheduled for maintenance within the next few years depending on scope and budget; Additional weed control scheduled in the same calendar year

High Severity (Priority/Corrective)	Full or near-full obstruction, safety hazard, or imminent risk to infrastructure	Initiated as soon as practicable; may require immediate or emergency response; Additional weed control scheduled in the same calendar year
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2.3 Adaptive Management

Inspection findings are used to prioritize maintenance activities and adjust vegetation management practices as needed. SEMSWA applies an adaptive management approach that considers system performance, environmental conditions, regulatory requirements, and lessons learned from flood or wildfire events. Management practices are updated periodically to reflect evolving best practices and operational needs.

3. Summary

This Vegetation Management Plan balances operational, public safety, and environmental considerations, with a primary focus on maintaining stormwater system performance and reducing stormwater and flood related risks associated with unmanaged vegetation. Through routine operations and maintenance activities, coordination with member jurisdictions, and application of best management practices, SEMSWA supports resilient stormwater facilities and riparian corridors that protect people, property, and water quality.