

Cypress

Environmental and Land Use Planning

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Winter Newsletter

January 2012

Greetings and a Happy New Year to You!

I hope you had a wonderful 2011 holiday season and are ready to tackle your new year's resolutions in the coming weeks! One of my New Year's wishes has just materialized. Rain and snow has finally come to California this season! The image of snow covered hills at the masthead is a nod to this much needed event!

In this edition of my newsletter:

- Two announcements about Cypress Environmental and Land Use Planning directly below.
- The new concept of [Complete Streets](#), a more "green" approach to street design and use for all types of people and modes and transportation.
- Understanding how [Plastic Netting can be Dangerous to Wildlife](#) in erosion control. There is a better alternative. I think this article will be of interest to both professionals and to homeowners alike.

Cypress Authored Article in National CEP Newsletter!

The Academy of Board Certified Environmental Professionals (ABCEP) November 2011 Newsletter included my article on the removal of the San Clemente Dam. I wrote this article for my summer 2011 newsletter and the Academy asked if they could reprint it in their national newsletter. You can read it again at: www.abcep.org/NL/2011November.pdf. My article begins on page 2.

My New Website!

My new website has been on-line since the first of December. It includes several new features, including copies of previous newsletters. To read past newsletters, just go to my website, <http://www.cypressenv.com> and click the Newsletter icon at the left edge of any web page. My website also provides a "Links to Other Information" page and a "Frequently Asked Questions" page under the "Resources" tab. Both are great resources for the general public and professionals. My new site also links up to my Facebook and LinkedIn sites.

Complete Streets are Green Streets

Previous newsletters have discussed the sustainable "green" approaches to neighborhood development and landscape architecture that are emerging. *The "go green" concept has now been extended to street use and design under the name of "Complete Streets"*. Complete street (sometimes called "green streets") are streets that are designed for ALL users at any ability and any age. They are designed and operated to allow safe use for motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders. Design is based in large part on how to provide users with a safe way to move along and across right-of-ways. They allow transit busses to run on time and make it safe for people to walk to and from train stations. Rather than being oriented primarily for motor vehicles, complete streets ensure safe and convenient access for all types of users. Transportation agencies adopting this new concept are changing their approach to transportation planning so entire right-of-ways provide safe access for all users regardless of age, physical ability or mode of transportation.



This complete street in the city center provides travel for all types of users

Why Now?

The movement to encourage complete streets across the USA is a result of all the negative side-effects of auto-oriented transportation, including smog, lack of safety, obesity and gas consumption. In the last 40 years, vehicle miles traveled has grown three times as much as the population growth in the USA! This is unsustainable. At the same time the emergence of the sustainable planning concepts of smart growth, New Urbanism and LEED-Neighborhood Development have extended to transportation engineers and other professionals engaged in street design. The state legislature has also jumped on this band wagon with the adoption of AB 1358. This bill, known as the California Complete Street Act of 2008, requires when the Circulation Element of a City or County General Plan is revised, it must plan for a balanced multi-modal transportation network that provides access for all users.

What Makes a Street Green?

Complete streets will take different forms depending on the amount of traffic and type of roadway. However, the characteristics to consider in designing a complete street are:

- [Vehicle lanes](#) with widths of 10-ft.--11-ft. (rather than the standard 12-ft. width) to provide space for wider bicycle lanes and reduced crossing times for pedestrians;
- [Permeable pavement](#) (at least in parking areas) to reduce storm runoff and foster percolation;
- [Pedestrian sidewalks](#) that are 4-ft. or wider on both sides of the street and that provide connections to other pedestrian facilities;
- [Bicycle lanes](#) or separated pathways that are 5-ft. or wider on both sides of the street and other innovative bicycle facilities, like bike boxes. (See image);
- Adequate [transit](#) stops and facilities that provide good connections to transit;
- [Landscaping](#) with an emphasis on tree-lined streets, to --A New Bike Box in Portland, Oregon -- help reduce vehicle speeds, reduce the urban-solar effect on warm days and help reduce global warming through carbon sequestration;
- [Bioretention](#) in planting areas, such as landscaped filter strips and rain gardens, at right-of-way edges to minimize storm runoff, maximize rainwater percolation and enhance aesthetics; and
- [Roundabouts](#) to replace traditional intersections. Roundabouts reduce traffic conflict points by 44% as compared to traditional intersections.



Planners! - Get Acquainted with AB 1358

The California Complete Streets Act requires all California cities and counties, in their next revision of their General Plan, to amend their traffic circulation policies to encourage a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the safe and convenient travel needs of *all* users of streets, roads, and highways. All users include motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities,



A Residential Complete Street in Buriem, WA

seniors, movers of commercial goods, and users of public transportation. AB 1358 also applies to applicable State agencies. Last year Caltrans revised the official *Caltrans Design Manual* by deleting the manual's Bicycle Chapter and addressing bike travel in all chapters of the manual. This year the manual will be updated again to discuss pedestrian and transit travel. Clearly, the idea of Complete Streets is here. How quickly the public sees new "green" improvements to their roadways will be determined by the level of commitment local elected officials have towards making their streets "complete" and, of course, finding the fiscal resources to do so. More information on Complete Streets can be found at: <http://www.centralcoastlidi.org>

Plastic Netting Can be Dangerous to Small Wildlife

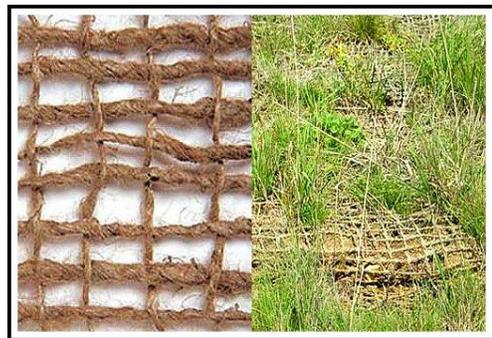
My Autumn Newsletter provided some tips for good erosion control for homeowners and professionals. One of my readers, wildlife biologist Mark Allaback, who co-owns Biosearch Wildlife Surveys, suggested I provide some additional guidance on erosion control netting so as to not give the



impression that all forms of netting are acceptable to wildlife. I agree. While erosion control netting is an important treatment to stabilize slopes and secure mulch material covering newly planted seed, the type of netting you select can have environmental implications. Plastic netting, of course, has the problem of not being biodegradable. But it has another lesser known problem of being hazardous to some species of wildlife. According to an article in the *Herpetological Review*, staff of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish reported several instances of snakes becoming entangled in plastic netting causing injury or death. Mr. Allaback has also observed this problem in California. Due to thin but tough netting material and the small mesh sizes of most plastic netting, the scales of

snakes become snagged in the netting in a manner that makes it extremely difficult to escape. Lizards and small birds have also been observed being entangled in plastic netting. A dramatic video of snake entanglement can be viewed at: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zI_2uhlzYRI.

Jute netting, made of 100% natural biodegradable fibers, is an easy and reliable alternative to plastic. Jute erosion control netting, also called jute erosion control cloth, is made a natural material that is softer and more subtle than plastic netting. The width of the individual strands of jute is too large to snag between the scales of snakes. The mesh sizes of jute netting are also substantially larger than most plastic netting marketed for erosion control. This larger mesh size makes it difficult for small birds or other animals to become entangled. Jute netting is marketed under several names, including "Ecojute" and "Bionet", but most



-- Jute netting before and after application --

forms are sold in 4-foot wide rolls, which facilitates application on steep slopes. Jute, like any other netting, helps reduce seed predation from bird species on level or sloping land as well as stabilize steeper slopes undergoing remediation. Erosion control netting is an important part of erosion remediation and conserving broadcasted seed.

Remember, erosion control netting should always:

- Be installed down slopes (never across or perpendicular to slopes);
- Be overlapped when installing on either slopes or level land; and
- Be regarded as one of several elements of erosion control.

Additional ideas for successful erosion control can be found in my autumn newsletter or by contacting a certified erosion control specialist. Using jute netting is the green and conscientious approach to good erosion control. Now, that seasonal precipitation has begun, let's hope we get enough rain this winter to germinate our erosion control seeding and plantings!

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