



## ENGINEERING AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

### *Stormwater and Erosion Control Division*

201 East Main St, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor, Durham, NC 27701  
Telephone (919) 560-0739 Fax (919) 560-0740

**To:** All Development Community Members Practicing in Durham County, NC

**From:** Jay Gibson, PE, CFM  
Ryan D. Eaves, PE, CFM, CPESC  
Engineering and Environmental Services  
201 E Main St, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Durham, NC 27701

**Subject:** Letter to Industry – June 18, 2026 – Acceptable Options for Establishment of Cover During Current Water Restrictions

### Purpose

Durham County recognizes the current extreme drought conditions create highly unfavorable conditions for establishment of the normally-specified ground covers to meet local and State Sedimentation Control requirements. To that end, County Engineering staff offer the following as potential alternative means as acceptable uses during this period of Stage 2 Water Restrictions.

### Applicability

**Below are acceptable options, in order of preference.** During this time, County Engineering - Erosion Control will consider these options sufficient to meet groundcover requirements, but long-term vegetation will still be required:

1. Erosion Control Matting, or Rolled Erosion Control Products (RECP), is likely the best option for stabilization. Most matting will include seed that will eventually germinate. Other matting options such as Turf Reinforcement Mats or Concrete Mats are also options.
2. Mulch is another option if sod cannot be applied. Mulch should be spread in a consistent, even layer so as to limit runoff of loose material.
3. Seed and straw remain a viable alternative so long as sufficient tackifier is used to hold it in place during these dry periods until germination can occur.

4. For sites that have water remaining within the Sediment Basin, seed and straw establishment would remain a preferred route via use of a pump and irrigation spray from the sediment basin to water the most critical areas. Additionally, reclaimed water may be available from the City of Durham and Durham County and may be used for irrigation or dust control. More information on reclaimed water is available here: <https://www.durhamnc.gov/1141/Reclaimed-Water> and <https://dconc.gov/Engineering-and-Environmental-Services/Utilities/Reclaimed-Water>.
5. Pine straw is another permanent stabilization option. Pine straw can lead to significant fire concerns when placed too close to some structures. Please ensure that all building and fire codes are followed with its placement. In addition, the City of Durham has a pine straw ordinance that states: “No pine straw mulch or any other landscaping material with a fire rate of spread more than 24 inches per minute shall be placed within ten (10) feet of buildings with combustible exterior construction.” Please refer to Durham City Code Section 46-88 for additional information. The Durham County Fire Marshal’s office also advises against the use of pine straw closer than ten (10) feet to a building foundation with combustible exterior construction.

### **Effective Date**

This Letter to Industry is effective until the Stage 2 Water Restrictions are lifted by the City of Durham.

### **Contact**

County Engineering’s Erosion Control staff recognizes that establishment permanent groundcovers is very difficult with these unusually dry conditions. If, during this time, you have questions or concerns regarding these options, or would like to discuss other alternatives, please reach out to your project’s assigned Erosion Control Technician or email us at [stormwater@dconc.gov](mailto:stormwater@dconc.gov).