

RP 277 – Evaluating Erosion Control Blankets Made with Waster Wool in Southeastern Idaho

○ Project Description:

This project seeks to evaluate a promising new material – woolen erosion control blankets – in order to improve ITD’s ability to address roadside reclamation requirements and to determine the most effective ways to provide for the long-term establishment of desirable perennial native vegetation as well as reduce surface erosion and weed establishment. Of particular interest are roadsides in environments where cheatgrass and other exotic or weedy species often dominate after disturbance and make it difficult for native perennials to establish.

○ Project Objective:

The main objectives of this project include:

1. Comparing the performance of the traditional erosion control blanket (ECB) used by ITD contractors for roadside slope revegetation - a straw/coir (coconut fibers) Type III ECB - with several newly developed woolen ECB prototypes of varying ratios of wool to straw. Performance will be evaluated based on the following metrics:
 - a. The amount of native grass vegetation (preferred vegetation), as measured by percent canopy cover, that establishes from the seed mix over two growing seasons under the various ratios of wool-straw ECBs in comparison to the traditional coir-straw ECB.
 - b. The amount of cheatgrass, other exotic grasses and weedy species (non-preferred vegetation), as measured by percent canopy cover, that establishes under the various ratios of wool-straw ECBs in comparison to the traditional coir-straw ECB.
 - c. The amount of erosion, as measured by percent cover of sheet erosion, rills and gullies.
2. Developing recommended protocols for when and how to use wool-straw ECBs in ITD revegetation plans and projects to support the most cost-efficient application for future use

○ Estimated Completion Date: November 30, 2020

○ Budget: \$79,001

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