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HYDROSEEDERS/MULCHERS

Section 8.4.7, US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
WILDLIFE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT MANUAL



by

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<p>An equipment report on hydroseeders/mulchers is provided as Section 8.4.7 of the US Army Corps of Engineers Wildlife Resources Management Manual. The report is designed to assist the Corps District or project biologist with the selection and use of types of equipment and materials available for habitat development and manipulation. Topics covered include description, operation and maintenance, limitations, and availability.</p> <p>Hydroseeders are pieces of equipment designed to apply seed, mulch, herbicides, and soil tackifiers in one operation through a water-based slurry system. Management objectives for using hydroseeders/mulchers are stated, and benefits for wildlife habitat development are discussed. The design and assembly of equipment are described and illustrated, and general specifications are provided. Methods of operation are described, and maintenance and safety requirements are given. Appropriate cautions and limitations are discussed.</p>					
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NOTE TO READER

This report is designated as Section 8.4.7 in Chapter 8 -- EQUIPMENT, Part 8.4 -- DRILL AND BROADCAST SEEDERS, of the US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS WILDLIFE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT MANUAL. Each section of the manual is published as a separate Technical Report but is designed for use as a unit of the manual. For best retrieval, this report should be filed according to section number within Chapter 8.

HYDROSEEDERS/MULCHERS

Section 8.4.7, US ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS
WILDLIFE RESOURCES MANAGEMENT MANUAL

DESCRIPTION	3	AVAILABILITY	7
OPERATION	5	LITERATURE CITED	8
LIMITATIONS	6		

Hydroseeders are designed to apply seed, mulch, herbicides, and soil tackifiers in one operation through a water-based slurry system; they can also be used for irrigation and to control dust and fire (Finn Corporation 1981). Hydroseeders can apply materials onto areas without having equipment directly on the site. This is advantageous on steep slopes and areas where compaction by equipment is detrimental. Hydroseeders have been used extensively for surface mine reclamation, revegetation of rights-of-way, dam face stabilization, and establishment of lawns. They can also be used to improve wildlife habitat on steep slopes using seed mixtures and mulches that will enhance growth of desirable forage species.

DESCRIPTION

Hydroseeders are simple pieces of equipment mounted on a truck or trailer (Fig. 1). They are composed of a large mixing tank that has agitating paddles or jets to mix the slurry and a motor-driven high-pressure centrifugal pump to move the material through a hose with a discharge nozzle. Tank sizes vary from 350 to 3000 gal. Large output centrifugal pumps can spray the mixture up to 200 ft. The hose (up to 200 ft in length) allows a larger area to be treated, or it can be used for small-scale or spot treatments. Spray type, rate of application, and distance of application are controlled by pump pressure and discharge volume, which can be adjusted by the person operating the nozzle. Several nozzle types are available to provide a variety of spray patterns (Reinco 1982). Other specifications are listed in Table 1.

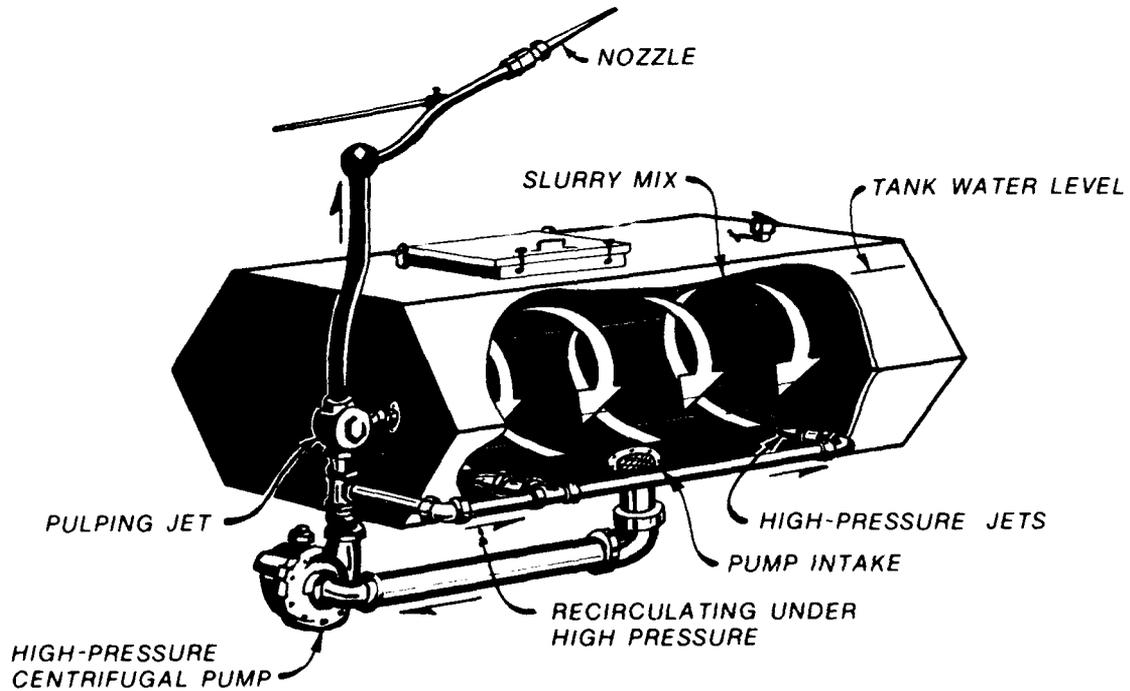
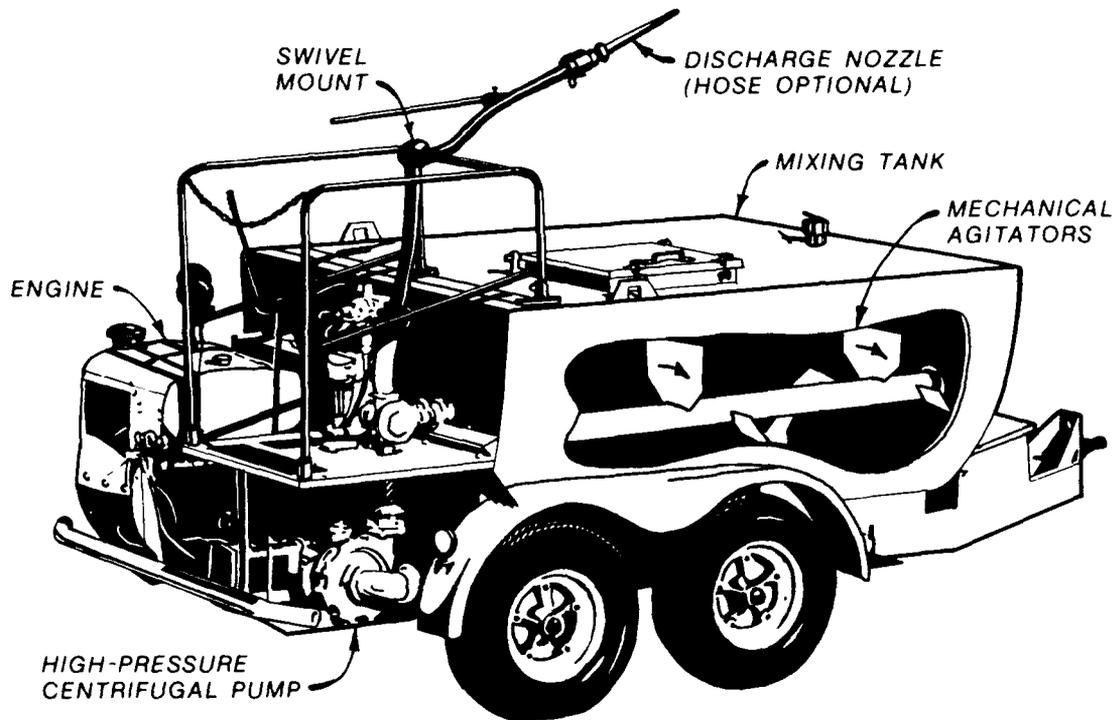


Figure 1. Trailer-mounted hydroseeder/mulcher with mechanical agitators (top). Bottom diagram shows a high-pressure jet agitation system which keeps the slurry mix in suspension (adapted from literature provided by the Finn and Reinco corporations)

Table 1. Specifications for 3 brands of hydroseeders

Feature	Finn	Bowie	Reinco
Type	Trailer and truck	Trailer and truck	Trailer and truck
Tank capacity	800-3000 gal	350-3000 gal	800-2500 gal
Agitator system	Paddle	Paddle	Hydraulic jet
Spray range	20-200 ft	20-200 ft	20-200 ft
Application rate	9-18 min/load		12-30 min/load
Options	200-400 ft hose 6 nozzle types Irrigation sprinkler nozzle	200 ft hose 5 nozzle types	200 ft hose 3 nozzle types

OPERATION

Hydroseeders can be operated while stationary or moving. Two to 3 people are required to operate the vehicle, feed the mixing tank, and operate the nozzle (Plass 1978, Larson 1980) (see Fig. 2). A supply truck is necessary to carry extra material for large jobs. Slurry-mix recommendations vary from 3% to 10% solids by weight (Larson 1980, Amimoto 1981). The slurry mix can contain various combinations of seed, fertilizer, organic mulch, pulverized limestone, inoculants, insecticides, and fungicides. It is best to follow manufacturers' guidelines and contract specifications.

The tank should be one-third full of water before solid materials are added (Amimoto 1981). The water and material should be agitated during the loading operation. Seed should not remain in the tank for longer than 1 hour to reduce seed damage and application problems (SCS 1976, Amimoto 1981). Seeding and mulching should be completed in 2 separate operations to improve plant establishment success. Recommended rates for mulch application vary from 900 to 4500 lb/acre depending on slope, soil texture, precipitation intensity, length of time required for slope protection, and other factors that determine erodibility of a site (Cook et al. 1970; Kay 1978, 1979; USDA Forest Service 1979; Amimoto 1981).

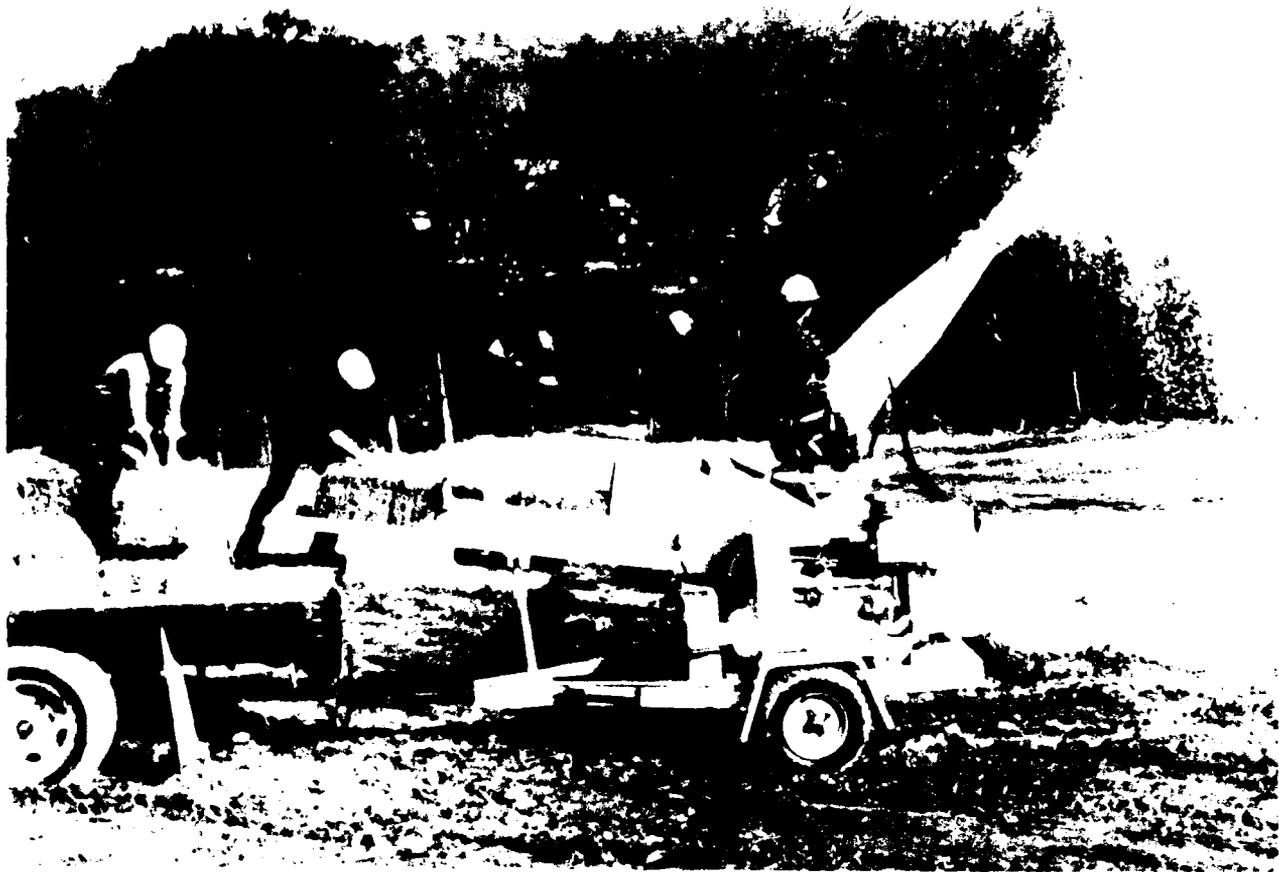


Figure 2. Medium power mulcher in operation (courtesy Finn Corporation)

LIMITATIONS

Hydroseeding is expensive and can only be justified when other application techniques are unavailable, overly manpower-intensive, not suited to a site, or require more time than schedules allow. This method also requires large amounts of water that may not be available at all sites. Hydroseeding is not adapted to normal operations in semiarid or arid regions (less than 14 in. rainfall) (Kay 1979) and is not suited for use on compacted soils. Hydraulic seeding and mulching equipment may damage seed and reduce germination by recirculating seed through the pump mechanism and internal agitators.

AVAILABILITY

Hydroseeders are available from the following sources:

Finn Corporation
2525 Duck Creek Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45208

Reinco
P. O. Box 584
Plainfield, New Jersey 07061

James Lincoln Corporation
3220 S. Jupiter Road
Garland, Texas 75041

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