

Vegetation

Vegetation is an effective and inexpensive way to stabilize dunes and protect marshes. It also enhances the natural beauty of the landscape, providing pleasing variety and contrast to the eye and attracting small animals to the food, nesting sites, and protective cover it affords.

In undisturbed environments, vegetation is often one of the most important elements in the natural protection of the land. Roots and stems tend to trap fine sand and soil particles, forming an erosion-resistant layer once the plants are well established. In marshes, vegetation also absorbs some of the water's energy, slowing down potentially erosive currents. Vegetation does not protect against storms, however, and it is more fragile than other erosion control measures described in this

brochure. Because shoreline plants are especially sensitive to human intervention, they should be protected, wherever possible, by restricting pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

New planting is generally not required in marshes but can be used to reinforce dunes. When vegetation is used as an erosion control device, careful selection is needed to match particular varieties of plants to local conditions of soil, wind, and water. Generally, native plants are more likely to thrive than imported vegetation, but some plants are hardy in a wide range of habitats. In many cases, the chances of successful planting are improved by using protective structures to reduce sand and water movement, at least until the plants are well established. Sand fences and low breakwaters are particularly useful for this purpose. Professional guidance in plant selection and design of supplementary control measures may improve the performance of the vegetation.



Vegetation planted for erosion control

