How to reclaim gravel shoulders

...in a way that lets you do it at a reasonable cost

At a National Association of Counties' convention 3 years ago, Jackson County's road commissioners saw the All-American Disk, a new shoulder reclaimer manufactured by Doyle, Inc. They were so impressed they purchased three of the units. What impressed them so much?

According to Bob Zenz, one of Jackson County's commissioners, not only could the disk reclaim gravel, it also made an easier job of restoring shoulder width and drainage. "The disk knocks down the berm," Zenz says, "and puts the gravel back in reach." With the shoulder reclaimer, road maintenance crews can economically salvage the displaced gravel and swiftly rebuild shoulders — important capabilities for Jackson County, which, like most counties, has many gravel shoulders suffering from displaced gravel.

The problems

Road maintenance often creates a dam — like a ridge of gravel at the outer edge of the shoulder that hampers drainage. Vegetation further compounds drainage problems. On asphalt roads, displaced gravel leaves a canal between the pavement and shoulder, creating not only a drainage problem, but also a pavement drop-off — a serious hazard for motorists.

To correct these problems, the road must be graded several times in order to break-up clumps of sod and reshape the shoulder. This procedure is time-consuming and wasteful, requiring numerous yards of new aggregate to replace the gravel lost during routine maintenance. The costs, in terms of time and materials, quickly add up.

A low-cost answer

The shoulder reclaimer's a
ity to recycle gravel helps
down those costs. The 6-ft. d
resembling a harrow, is
tached behind a tractor.
disk is angled, so the tractor
remain partially on the ro
way. As the disk grinds the
and weeds, it throws the
claimed gravel and fines a
ple of feet back up the slop
the shoulder, eliminating o
ridges as ruts are backfil
Anywhere from 50 to 100
of gravel can be reclaimed
mile.

The Minnesota Departm
of Transportation tested
disk in one of its districts,
the results were impressiv
one particular operation,
shoulder reclaimer sa
MnDOT over $2,400/mi. c
pared with the previ
method, while accomplish
the same result. In another
section, the disk reclaimec
lane mi. of shoulders in
day, an operation that
viously took 3 days.

Doyle, Inc. recommends
claiming shoulders in the fa
spring. The ground is mois
gravel shoulders on asp
roads can be compacted p
erly, and the dry, rotten veg
tion can easily be tilled.
added benefit of the mulc
action of the disk is that veg
tion is discouraged from g
ing back, reducing the nee
mowing or for using herbic
— alleviating the public's
cerns about damage to the e
ronment. ❐

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