

LATIS: A Spatial Decision Support System to Assess Low Impact Site Development Strategies

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Abstract

Significant advances have been made in the use of spatial and hydrologic models to quantify the impact of BMP/LID practices on water quality, but little research has focused on calculating the implementation costs associated with these BMP's when integrated with a decision support system (DSS). This research project had three phases. The first was a review and selection of a public domain water quality model. Hydrologic Simulation Program in FORTRAN (HSPF), an unsteady flow model, was selected as the hydrologic and water quality program. The second phase assessed the potential to link the model to a desktop Geographic Information System (GIS). The third phase focused on identifying BMP's that are often included in low impact development strategies, including implementation, operation, and maintenance cost data. This information was collected from several national sites and loaded into a database, which was later linked to the site's individual BMP's housed in the GIS. This allowed development costs for different combinations or configurations of BMP's to be calculated in real time.

Keywords: decision support systems, cost analysis, planning, runoff, urban hydrology, sustainability

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Introduction

1 Commercial, industrial, and residential development is increasingly challenged to minimize
2 disruption of the natural hydrologic regime to comply with environmental regulations. In particular
3 site plans are being evaluated based on their water quality and quantity impacts on a watershed
4 scale. Site development plans that maintain the hydrologic regime and sustain water quality
5 downstream are consistent with the approach described as smart growth or low impact
6 development. Significant advances have been made in the use of spatial models, including
7 geographical information systems (GIS) and sophisticated hydrologic models, to assess the
8 impact of potential development. Similarly, experience with best management practices (BMP)
9 provides good insight into how various management practices such as stormwater detention and
10 vegetated areas contribute to improved water quality. The Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA),
11 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, and
12 Mississippi State University encourage the use of low impact/smart growth strategies and want to
13 make their application rapid and easy. The work described here is intended to advance that goal.

Objective

14 This project was performed to evaluate the potential of DSS tools that would allow users to
15 balance watershed protection with smart growth/low impact site development strategies.
16 Specifically, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)
17 needed a DSS that would:
18

- 19 • Predict time-varying runoff as a function of rainfall, site characteristics, and Best
20 Management Practices (BMP) for development sites within the Southeastern U.S.
- 21 • Calculate BMP cost.
- 22 • Allow various scenarios to be compared for effectiveness and cost.
- 23 • Be GIS-based for input queries and for output displays.
- 24 • Run on a desktop computer.

- 25 • Be in the public domain to the maximum extent possible.
- 26 • Either possess the capability or be extensible to future capabilities to predict water quality
- 27 variables

28 **Approach**

29 Assessment criteria based on the above objectives were used to select a hydrologic modeling
30 approach from currently available public domain models suitable for assessing low impact site
31 development. Available BMP effectiveness and cost information was compiled and selected
32 information was incorporated in an easily retrievable spreadsheet form. A desktop GIS was
33 selected for spatial data analysis and manipulation. Finally, the combined system was tested on
34 an example – that of the American Eurocopter plant located at Golden Triangle Regional Airport
35 in Lowndes County, Mississippi. The system was also tested on a 16.6 hectare commercial
36 development in Hendersonville, Tennessee, and a 900 hectare potential industrial park in Tunica,
37 Mississippi. Only the Eurocopter site application is discussed here. The methodology for the
38 other two sites would be the same.

39 **Hydrologic Model**

40 The Hydrologic Simulation Program – Fortran (HSPF) model (Bicknell 2001; EPA 2004a) was
41 selected as most likely to satisfy the project's requirements. HSPF computes the movement of
42 water through a complete hydrologic cycle – rainfall, evapotranspiration, runoff, infiltration, and
43 flow through the ground – and the associated transport of constituents with that flow.

44 The latest version of HSPF is Version 12, which is packaged with Version 3.1 of EPA's Better
45 Assessment Science Integrating Point and Nonpoint Sources (BASINS). BASINS is an
46 integrated system of models and tools for performing water quality analyses of watersheds. It
47 uses the commercial Arcview 3 GIS software package, which must be installed on the computer
48 before BASINS can be installed. Some versions of HSPF can be run in standalone mode, but the
49 EPA-supported version is run through a BASINS interface, WinHSPF (EPA 2004a).

50 WinHSPF runs under Microsoft Windows with a graphical user interface for input, model
51 execution, and output displays. The interface is fairly straightforward, but is still in the early
52 stages of deployment and does not support all the features of HSPF that are needed for
53 evaluating site development.

54 **BMP Database**

55 A limited review of available data and guidance on BMP characteristics, removal efficiencies and
56 costs was conducted in order to evaluate the applicability of available data and guidance. For the
57 comparisons of effectiveness and costs within the selected modeling framework, three types of
58 information were required: removal efficiencies, costs, and rates of infiltration. Contaminants of
59 interest for this project include those defined in a 2004 draft in-stream monitoring protocol
60 prepared by Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. The information
61 considered relevant was then compiled in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet for use.

62 **Review and Assessment of Available Information**

63 A plethora of data is available on BMPs, much of which is of limited use in design. There are a
64 number of reports and databases available that compile results of BMP studies (e.g. the
65 International Stormwater Best Management Practices Database (ISBMPD 2004); however, in
66 many cases those reports and databases either have limited information on removal efficiencies
67 of contaminants of interest or include such a wide range of removal efficiencies as to be of limited
68 use. For example, in the ISMPMD, which compiled information from over 200 studies conducted
69 during the past 15 years, nitrogen data are compiled and reported in six forms (nitrate+nitrite
70 nitrogen, ammonia nitrogen, Kjeldhal Nitrogen, Organic Nitrogen Dissolved, Organic Nitrogen
71 Particulate, and Total Nitrogen). The database contains only 13 records for Total Nitrogen
72 removal efficiencies (for all BMP surveyed) that ranged from - 47 to + 62 percent. Similarly, five
73 forms of phosphorus were tabulated with 22 records for Total Phosphorus removal efficiencies
74 (for all BMP surveyed) that ranged from - 84 to + 80 percent. Such wide ranges from anecdotal
75 evidence are not satisfactory for design.

76 After careful review, three sources of information were identified which contained sufficient and
77 relevant information (for the purposes of this project) regarding the design and removal
78 efficiencies of BMPs. These sources are:

- 79 • Stormwater Best Management Practices in an Ultra-Urban Setting (FWHA 2004)
- 80 • Post-Construction Storm Water Management in New Development & Redevelopment,
81 BMP Fact Sheets (EPA 2004b)
- 82 • Georgia Stormwater Management Manual, Volume 2: Technical Handbook (Atlanta
83 Regional Commission 2004)

84 Of the above, the Georgia Stormwater Manual was considered the most complete and applicable
85 for the Southeastern United States. Information on removal efficiencies and infiltration rates
86 (where available) was compiled from these sources. A variety of sources were surveyed which
87 provided information regarding the costs associated with BMP implementation and are described
88 by Wilkerson et al. (2005). The cost information sources provided a minimum, maximum, and
89 average cost associated with construction of a particular BMP, as well as a cost formulation
90 where applicable, and maintenance costs. Information from these sources was compiled in the
91 BMP database.

92 **BMP Database**

93 Information on BMP removal efficiencies, costs, and rates of infiltration was compiled into a BMP
94 analysis spreadsheet. The spreadsheet is subdivided into five worksheets, which are briefly
95 described below.

96 *Selection*

97 The Selection worksheet is the main working sheet for BMP assessments. The selection
98 worksheet is subdivided into three parts. Part A of the worksheet (see Figure 1) has a list box
99 that allows the user to select a specific BMP for further analysis. Once the user selects the BMP,
100 the information compiled on that BMP is presented. The information provided includes a range of
101 removal efficiencies for the following water quality constituents: Total Suspended Solids, Total

102 Phosphorus, Total Nitrogen, Nitrate-Nitrogen, Metals, Bacteria, Oil and Grease, and TpH.
103 Information on the construction and maintenance costs for the selected BMP is provided as low,
104 high, and average values and as a unit cost where applicable.

105 Presently, Part A of the Selection worksheet is intended to allow users to rapidly screen the costs
106 and effectiveness of specific BMP. For model implementation, specific values of BMP removal
107 efficiencies and costs must be determined, which requires a more detailed analysis. To aid in this
108 analysis, part B of the Selection worksheet (see Figure 2) includes links to embedded files for
109 specific BMP from each of the three sources cited. Since there were inconsistencies in
110 terminology among the sources, the original names for specific BMP were retained from each of
111 these sources and grouped into like types. The user can select a specific BMP type and review
112 guidance from each of these sources in order to aid in the final design and selection of a BMP,
113 and in determination of removal efficiencies and costs.

114 The final part of the Selection worksheet, part C, is a link to an embedded file for the BOB In-
115 Stream Monitoring Protocols. BOB provides guidance on what, when, where, and how to collect
116 in-stream samples that may be used, for example, to evaluate or support the implementation of a
117 BMP (Smith 2004).

118 *Removal Data Table*

119 The second worksheet is the Removal Data Table (Figure 3). The table is provided for more
120 detailed information on specific BMP removal efficiencies and is the basis for the information
121 included in Part A of the Selection Worksheet. Drop down menus for each column allow the user
122 to rapidly sort among BMP or water quality constituents. References and links are provided for
123 the source of the tabulated information.

124 *Cost Data Table*

125 The third worksheet is the Cost Data Table (Figure 4). This worksheet provides more detailed
126 cost information and is the basis for the summary information in Part A of the Selection
127 worksheet. References and links are provided for each source of cost information.

128 *Maintenance Data Table*

129 The fourth worksheet is the Maintenance Data Table (Figure 5) This worksheet provides more
130 detailed maintenance information and is the basis for the summary information in Part A of the
131 Selection worksheet. References and links are provided for each source of BMP maintenance
132 information.

133 *Infiltration Data Table*

134 The fifth and final worksheet is the Infiltration Data Table (Figure 6). This worksheet provides
135 more detailed information on available infiltration data and is the basis for the summary
136 information in Part A of the Selection worksheet. The information is based on a limited survey
137 and will be refined in subsequent phases of this project.

138 **GIS Interface**

139 Since the selected HSPF model is connected with ESRI Arcview as its underlying GIS engine,
140 Arcview was selected as the GIS interface for integrating the BMP cost data and provide input to
141 the hydrologic model. Arcview is not delivered with an extension that will calculate area required
142 for the HSPF model analysis and for costing BMP scenarios. A search was made of the ESRI
143 knowledge base (ESRI 2004) and a suitable extension identified. More than one extension may
144 be found on the WEB site, but the one used as part of this project is simply called Area Tools.
145 When the BMP theme is selected and the Area Tools extension is launched an additional column
146 is added to the attribute table, which is in .DBF format, containing area values in various units. At
147 this point the attribute table has an ID or name for each BMP plus an area calculation. The table
148 is now ready for linking with the database containing BMP costs and characteristics.

149 Multiple approaches to linking the two tables were evaluated as part of this task. The first
150 approach was to create all the area information inside Arcview and then export it to the external
151 database/spreadsheet. This approach was unsatisfactory because of the static nature of the
152 attribute data. A second approach tested involved linking the original Excel spreadsheet to
153 Arcview. This also proved to be cumbersome, due to the difficulty in identifying columns and
154 setting data types. The third approach tested involved importing the existing spreadsheet data
155 into Microsoft Access. The primary advantages to the Access approach are:

- 156 • The data type setting for each column is easier to define
- 157 • Identification of each column heading is simpler
- 158 • The BMP cost data is relatively static, the BMP area is not
- 159 • Access has more analytical capabilities

160 **Application to the Eurocopter Site**

161 The BMP analysis spreadsheet, Arcview, and BASINS with the HSPF model were applied to the
162 American Eurocopter site in Lowndes County, Mississippi, to test the approach and identify
163 needed improvements. The Eurocopter site occupies 36 ha adjacent to the Golden Triangle
164 Regional Airport in western Lowndes County, Mississippi. Figure 7 shows the site development
165 plan.

166 **Creating HSPF Input Data**

167 Arcview was used to collect sub-watershed land use information to be used in the HSPF model.
168 Post-construction drawings were used to generate area definitions from an original file in
169 Autodesk AutoCAD structure provided by Neel-Schaffer Inc., the consulting engineering firm that
170 designed the facility. These line drawings were imported into Arcview and converted to a shape
171 file (see Figure 7). The land use areas were defined as pervious and impervious cover, and
172 broken into sub-watersheds as required by HSPF. These values were compared to area values
173 found in the original AutoCAD file to verify that spatial accuracy had not been lost during the
174 translation. The sub-watershed information was then used to create the HSPF model site
175 schematic.

176 The Phase I development consists of a manufacturing building, taxiway, and loading dock plus
177 adjacent roads, parking areas, walkways, and lawns. Phase I developments were delineated into
178 sub-catchment areas as shown in Figure 8 for calculating rainfall-runoff. The site grading plan
179 was used to identify the runoff pathways and slopes of the site. The resulting drainage schematic
180 is shown in Figure 9.

181 **Creation of HSPF Model**

182 Three site configurations were tested with HSPF using meteorological conditions for the period
183 March 1992 through June 1995:

- 184 • Predevelopment
- 185 • As-built 1
- 186 • As-built with multiple BMP
- 187 • As-built with a single BMP in the outlet channel

188 **Results**

189 No field observations were available with which to validate the hydrologic model. Since this effort
190 was intended to be a proof of concept, the absence of field data was worrisome, but not
191 insurmountable. Using a range of infiltration and storage coefficients helps increase confidence
192 in the results, but they should still not be used for design until corroborated by field data. Limited
193 testing of scale effects (Collins et al, 2006) showed that sites on the order of the Eurocopter
194 development could be successfully modeled using HSPF and coefficients used for watershed-
195 scale applications, which are numerous.

196 Figures 10, 11, and 12 show the site total runoff rate for four tested configurations under a typical
197 rainfall event on 3 May 1994 in which about 2.5 cm of rain fell in 6 hours as depicted in Figure 10.
198 Figure 10 shows the high and low estimates for the as-built conditions along with pre-
199 development conditions, with which they overlap.

200 Figure 11 shows the effect of multiple BMP compared with the as-built condition. The multiple
201 BMPs were effective, reducing the peak discharge to a lower level ($0.035 \text{ m}^3/\text{sec}$) than
202 predevelopment conditions; however, they would be expensive. Based on cost information found
203 in the BMP database, a combination of extended detention wetlands, pocket wetlands, and
204 vegetative channels would have cost in excess of \$500,000.

205 Figure 12 show results for a single checkdam. The peak discharge was significantly reduced,
206 from the as-built high estimate of $0.071 \text{ m}^3/\text{sec}$ to about $0.035 \text{ m}^3/\text{sec}$, the same as the multiple
207 BMP solution and lower than the pre-development low estimate. The BMP database indicates

208 that a wet basin costs \$17 to \$35 per m³ to construct from scratch, which for the 850 m³ size
209 would be \$15,000 to \$30,000, less expensive than the multiple BMP; however, since the channel
210 is already there, it would cost only \$5,000 to \$10,000 to build the specified checkdam with an
211 earth core and riprap covering. This latter cost is well within the range of acceptable
212 implementation costs.

213 **Conclusions and Recommendations**

214 As stated earlier, this study's objective was to evaluate the potential for a tool set incorporating a
215 public domain hydrologic model and BMP assessment data linked to a desktop GIS. The basic
216 objectives were met, but with qualifications. Summaries for each component are listed below.

217 BMP Database

218 The initial development of these tools has provided a framework that can be used, given available
219 information, to aid in the evaluation of the removal efficiencies of selected BMP, and the
220 associated cost of those BMPs. The database limitations are a result in part from the lack of
221 detailed information on the removal efficiencies and costs of BMP. Limits also result from the
222 lack of relationships between the design of BMP (for example sizing) and constituent removal
223 efficiencies. Additional review, and perhaps research, is required in order to develop improved
224 methods for relating BMP design to costs and removal efficiencies. Field scale studies coupled
225 with high-resolution modeling of specific BMPs is recommended for consideration in future project
226 phases as an aid developing and evaluating BMP removal efficiencies and design alternatives.
227 The present version of the BMP analysis spreadsheet is not directly linked with the GIS or
228 hydrologic model. More direct linkages are recommended, and are planned for development
229 under later phases of this work effort.

230 GIS Interface

231 ESRI Arcview was chosen for the GIS interface to be tested. This was due to two factors: ESRI's
232 widespread acceptance and the requirement that the hydrologic model HSPF have access to
233 Arcview, even though it not in the public domain. At some time in the near future ESRI will
234 probably phase out Arcview as a standalone package, in favor of ArcGIS. This will result in a

235 more costly implementation for individual users, but one with greater customization options, as
236 well as an easier migration to the WEB, which may be the ultimate solution. The database model
237 of ArcGIS is also more robust, providing greater ease of linkage with external databases.

238 Another option that should be tested is to include CAD as well as GIS for the spatial interface.
239 Substantially more engineering offices use CAD as a normal part of their daily operations than
240 use GIS. This trend will probably change over the next decade as more public agencies require
241 submission of public engineering project in GIS rather than CAD format. But for now CAD is the
242 dominant desktop tool for collecting and analyzing spatial data in engineering offices. By
243 incorporating CAD in the process it would be easier, and cheaper, for engineering firms to adopt
244 the new technology.

245 Hydrologic Model

246 HSPF can be used to evaluate development site hydrology and management practices that
247 preserve site hydrologic responses. Further, HSPF's modules for water quality and BMP's can
248 be employed to evaluate water quality management measures. The process by which the
249 Eurocopter site was modeled required several manual processing steps that made the process
250 cumbersome and ill-suited for widespread adoption. Automating those steps in BASINS,
251 WinHSPF, AutoCAD, and/or some new interface will improve the process. WinHSPF proved to be
252 awkward because it does not support some HSPF features essential to this purpose. HSPF
253 modules are not optimally formulated to reproduce best management and low impact
254 development measures. Improvements to allow reach flows into land segments and detention
255 structures on land segments will significantly improve the model's capability to assist with site
256 development issues. Scalability, i.e., running the model on small sites using coefficients and
257 equations known to work for watershed-scale applications, remains an issue despite limited
258 testing which suggests that the process works for sites of the tested size.

259 **Peer Review of the Model**

260 A peer review of the model was held in Starkville, MS March 23, 2005. Twelve participants
261 selected from a cross section of public, private, and non-profit organizations attended. The
262 morning session included demonstrations and discussion of the model, followed by a working

263 lunch and a facilitated session to review the work, to determine any issues with the project, and to
264 identify the next steps to be taken. The overall assessment was positive. A series of prioritized
265 improvements was generated, including making the product more user friendly, showing the cost
266 benefit/advantages of the BMP's better, and validating the accuracy of the model. A series of
267 target markets were also identified, including engineers, developers, and public sector agencies
268 such as DEQ.

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Arcview is a registered trademark of Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI).

Windows, Excel, and Access are registered trademarks of Microsoft, Inc.

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Figure 12. Comparison of HSPF model results for the pre-development and as-built conditions with a check dam in the outlet channel.

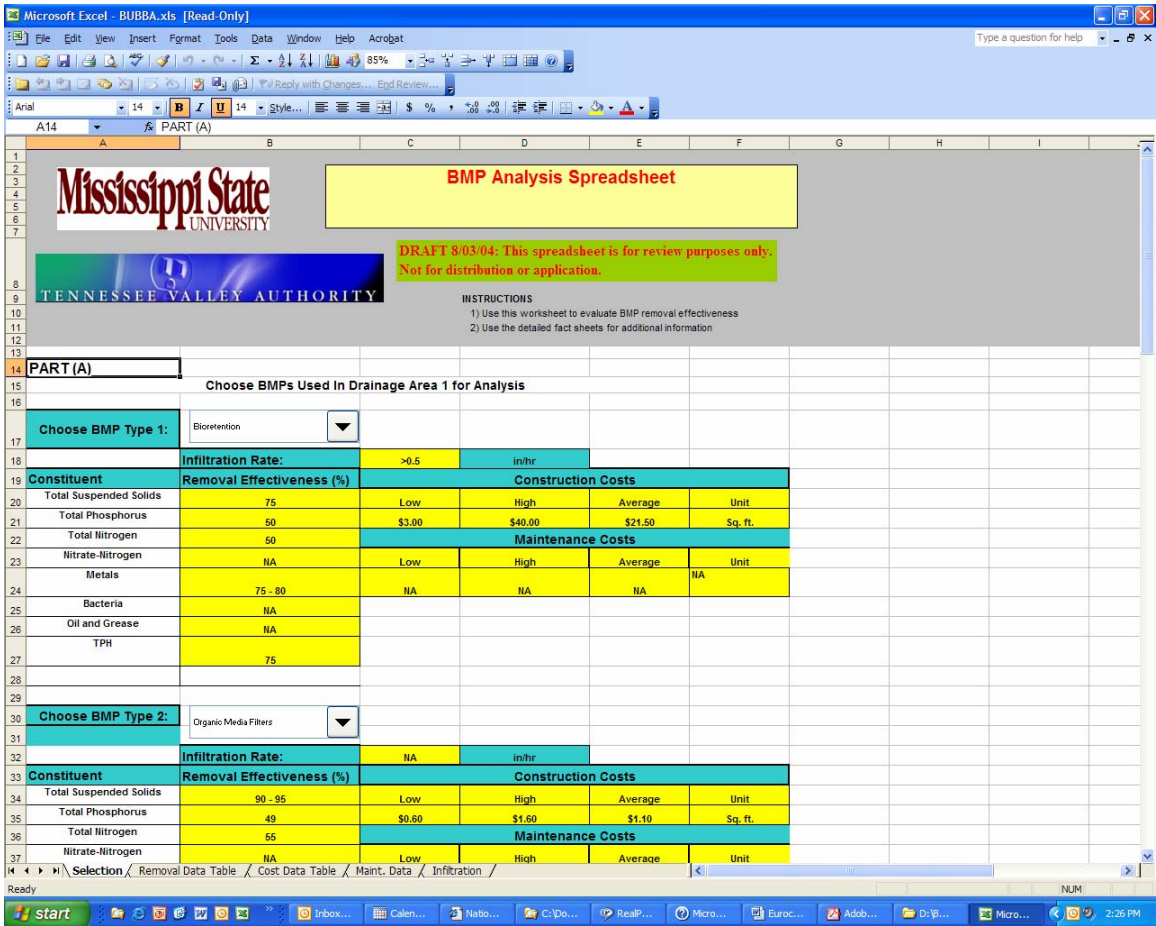


Figure 1. Part A of the Selection worksheet

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PART (B)

| A | B | C | D | E | F |
|----|--|--|--|---|---|
| 60 | PART (B) | | | | |
| 61 | | | | | |
| 62 | Selected BMP Fact sheets for additional information | | | | |
| 63 | Source: | FHWA1 | Georgia Stormwater2 | U.S. EPA3 | |
| 64 | Structural BMPs | | | | |
| 65 | <i>Ponds</i> | Detention Ponds | Dry Detention / Dry ED Basins Multi-Purpose Detention Areas | Dry extended detention ponds Wet ponds | |
| 66 | | | Underground Detention | | |
| 67 | | Detention Tanks | | | |
| 68 | <i>Infiltration Practices</i> | Infiltration Basin | Infiltration Trenches | Infiltration basin Infiltration trench | |
| 69 | | Infiltration Trench | Porous Concrete | Porous pavement | |
| 70 | | Porous Pavement | Modular Porous Paver Systems | | |
| 71 | | | | | |
| 72 | <i>Filtration Practices</i> | Bioretention | Bioretention Areas | Bioretention | |
| 73 | | Underground Sand Filters | Underground Sand | Sand and organic filters | |
| 74 | | Surface Sand Filters | Sand Filters | | |
| 75 | | Organic Media Filters | Organic Filter | | |
| 76 | | | Grass Channel Stormwater | Storm water wetland | |
| 77 | <i>Vegetative Practices</i> | Wetlands | Wetlands Submerged Gravel Wetlands | | |
| 78 | | | Enhanced Swales | Grassed swales | |
| 79 | | Vegetated Swales | | | |
| 80 | | Vegetated Filter Strips | Filter Strip | Grassed filter strip | |
| 81 | <i>Runoff/pretreatment</i> | Catch Basin Inserts | | Catch basins/Catch basin insert | |
| 82 | | | | In-line storage | |
| 83 | | Manufactured Systems | Proprietary Structural Controls | Manufactured products for storm water inlets | |

Selection / Removal Data Table / Cost Data Table / Maint. Data / Infiltration /

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Figure 2. Part B of the Selection worksheet.

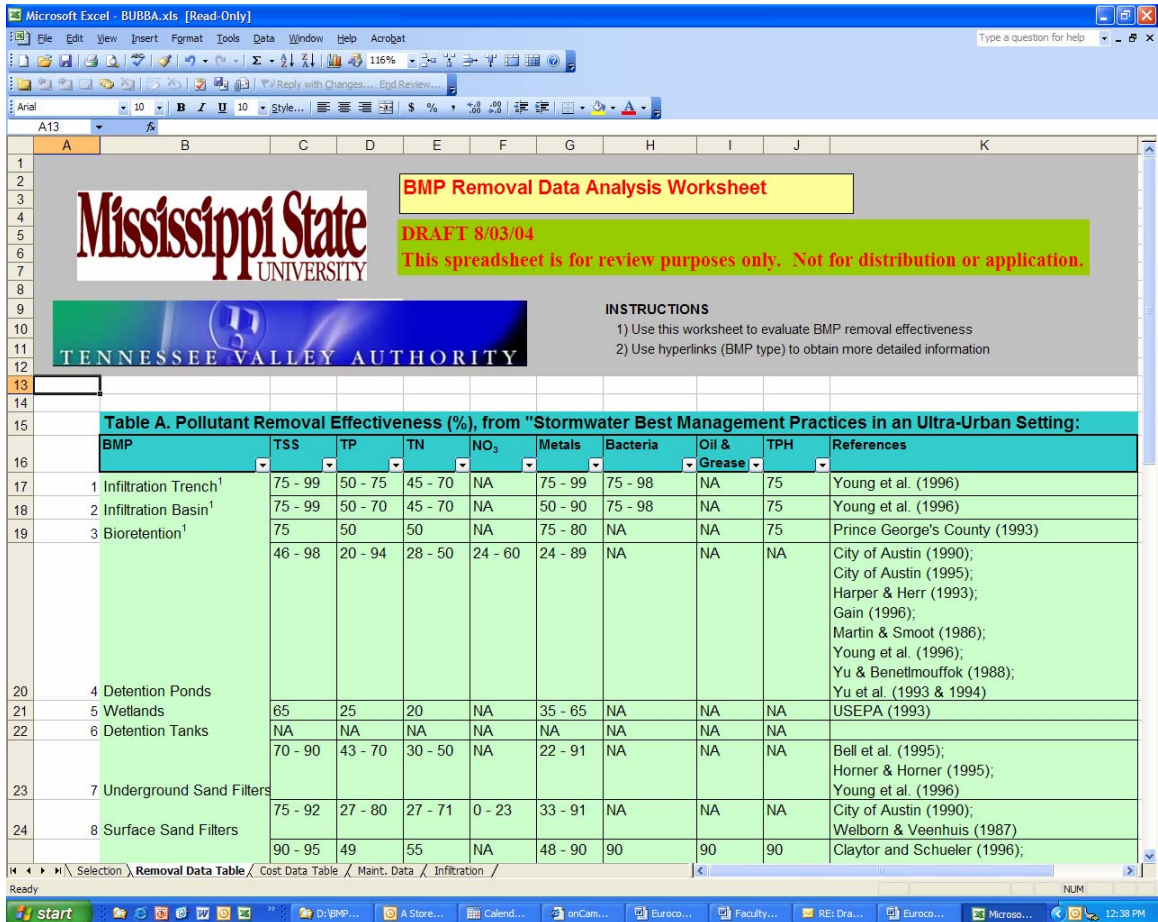


Figure 3. Removal Data Table Worksheet.

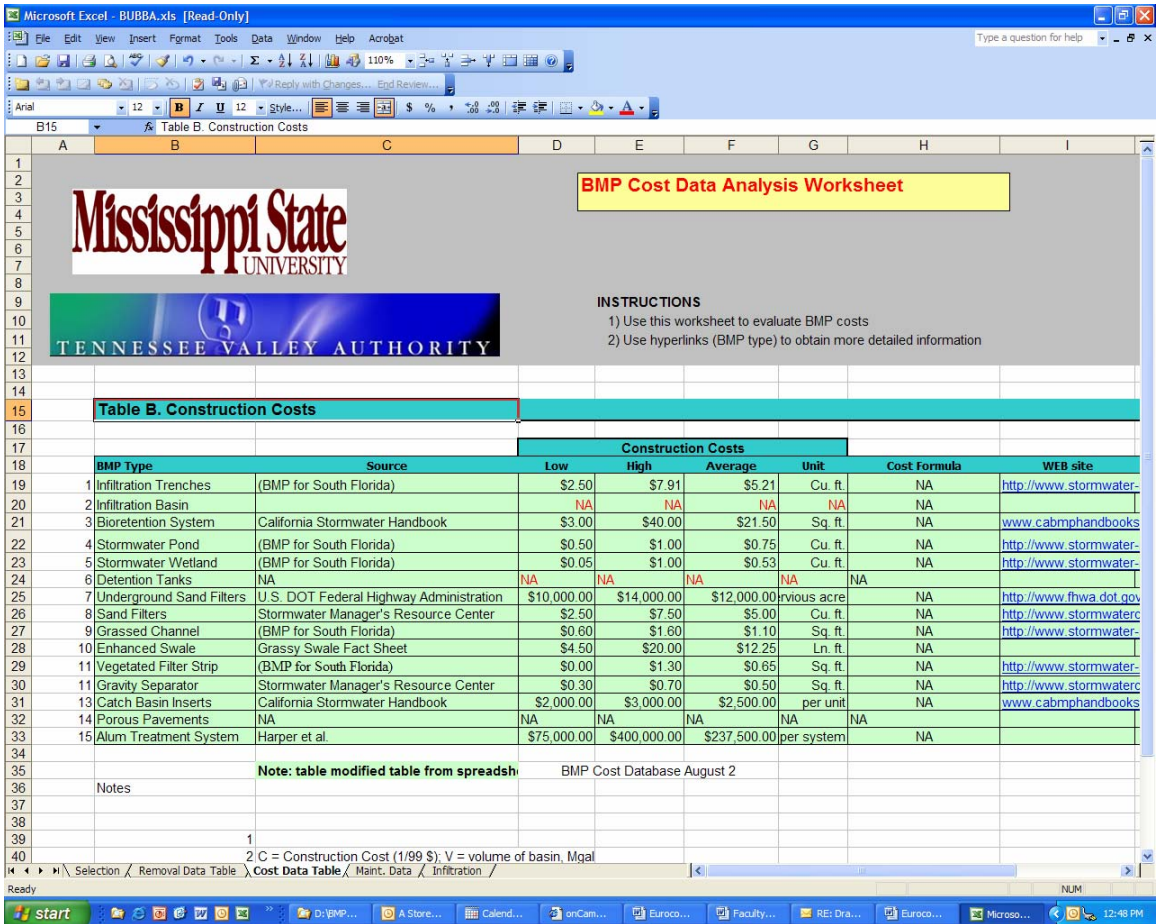


Figure 4. The Cost Data Table worksheet.

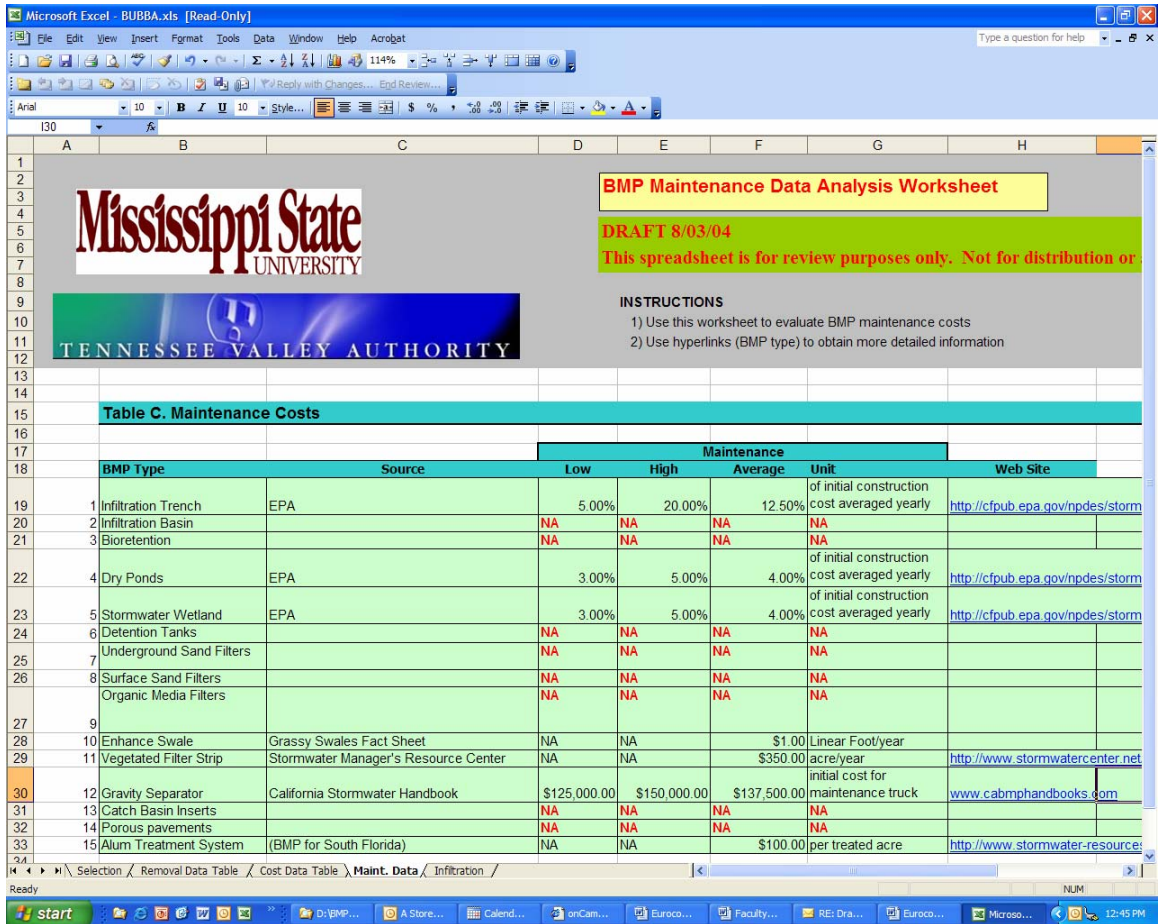


Figure 5. The Maintenance Data Table worksheet.

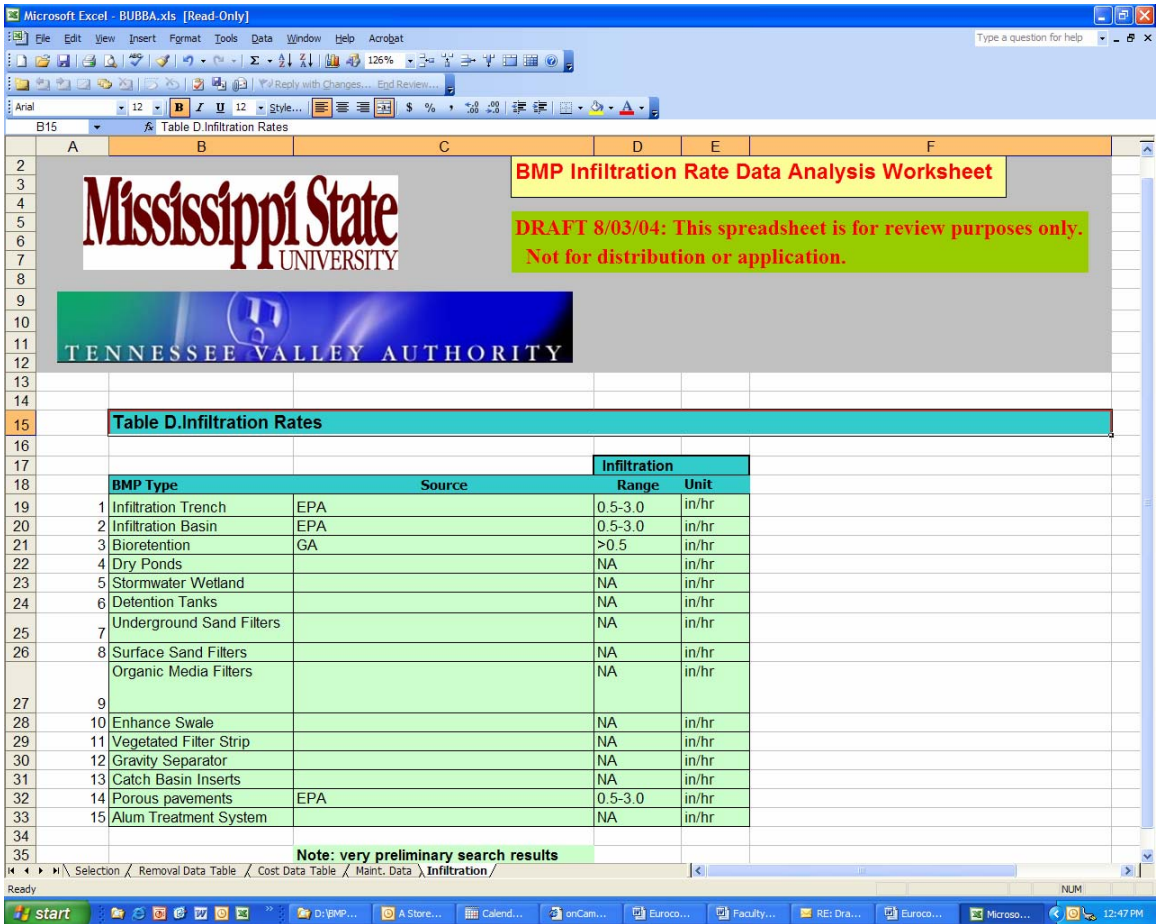


Figure 6. The Infiltration Data Table worksheet.

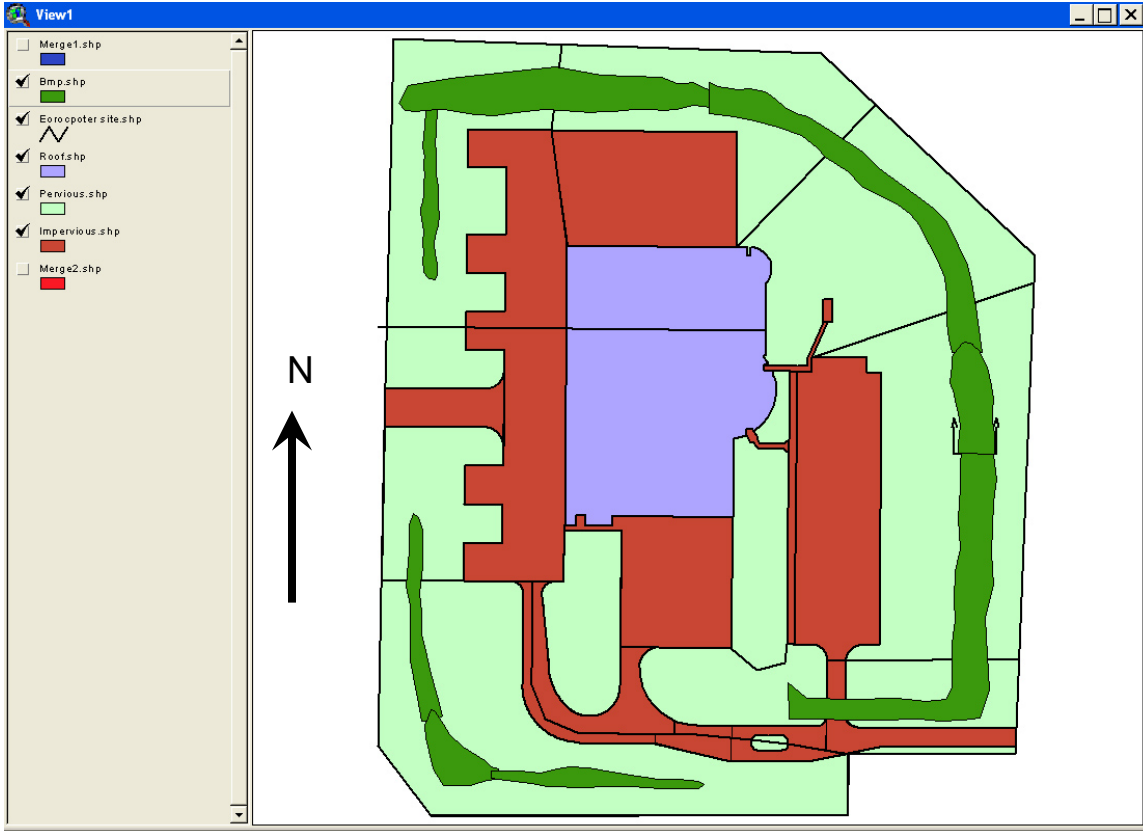


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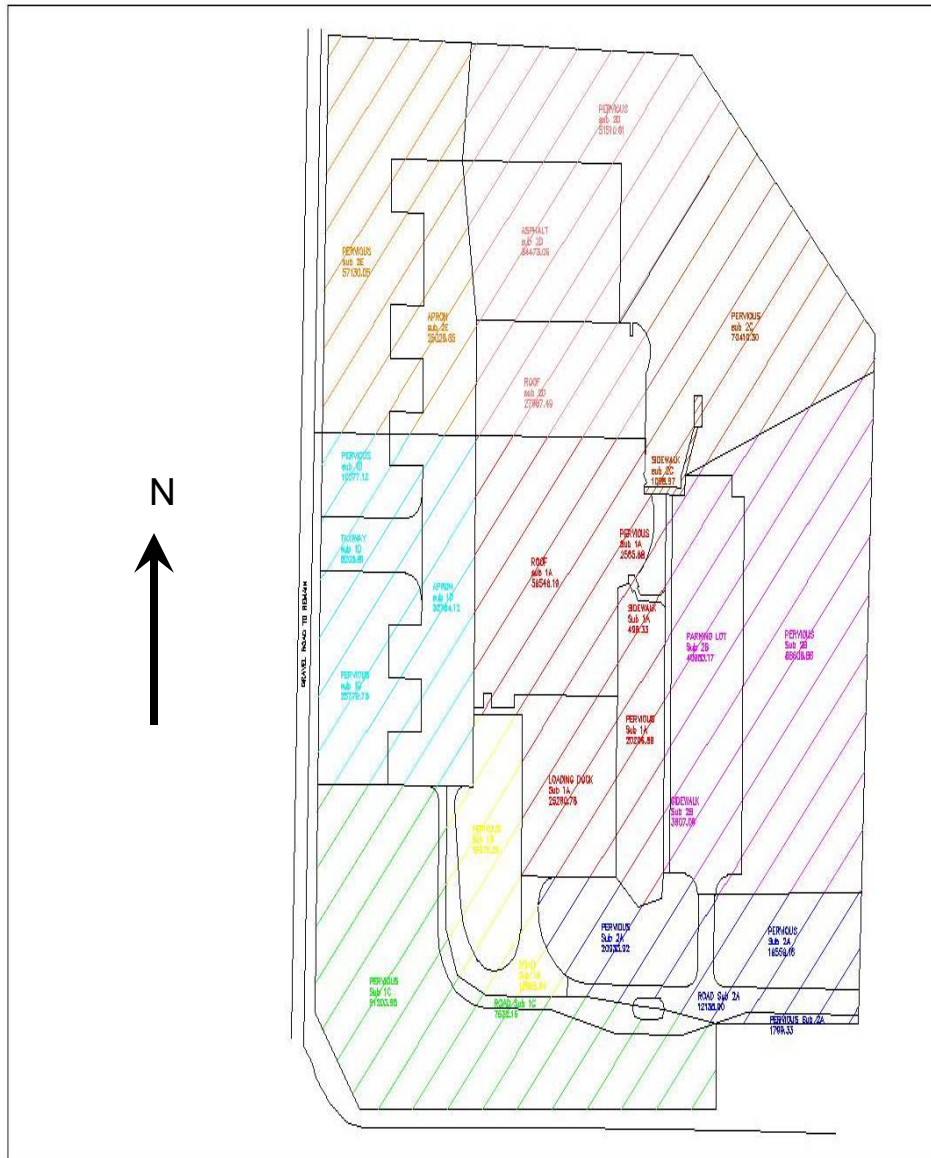


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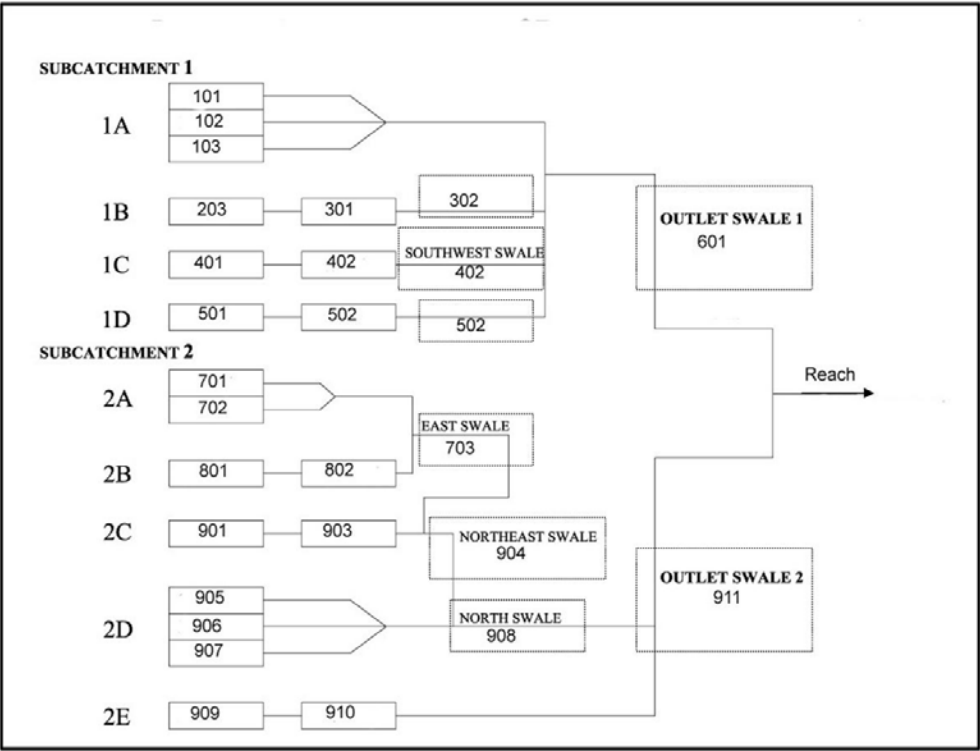


Figure 9. HSPF segment numbering for the Eurocopter site.

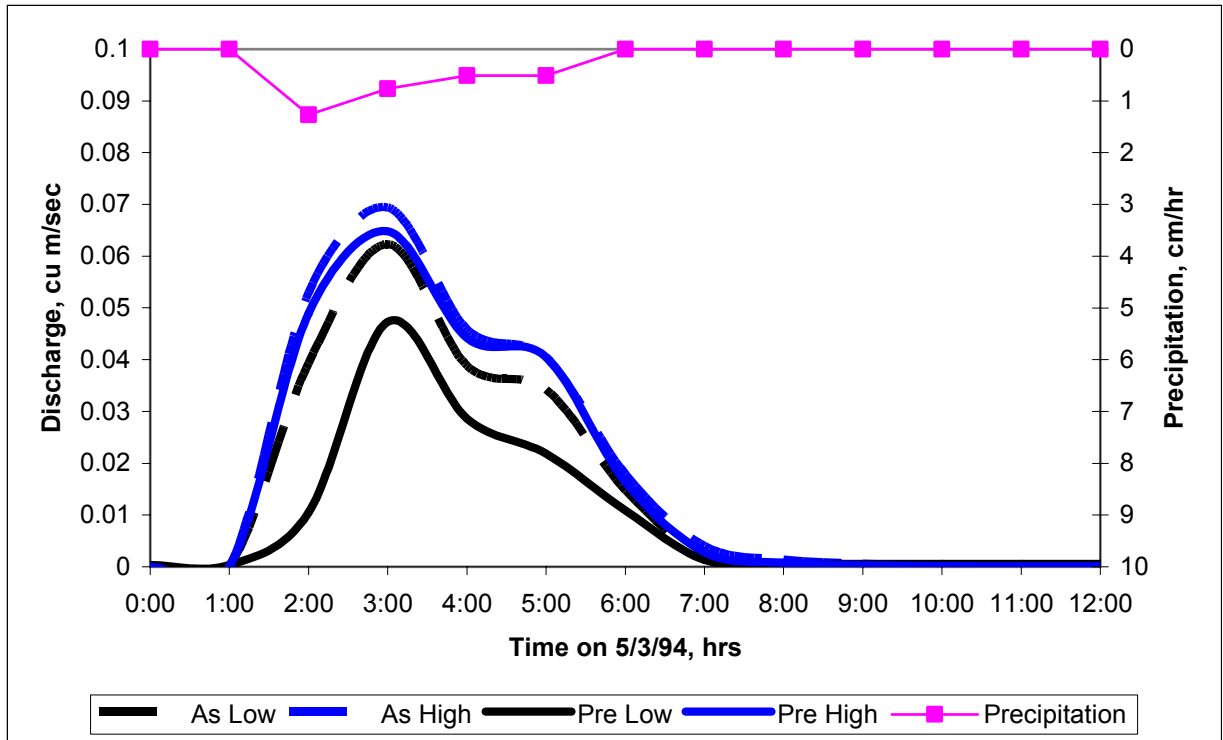


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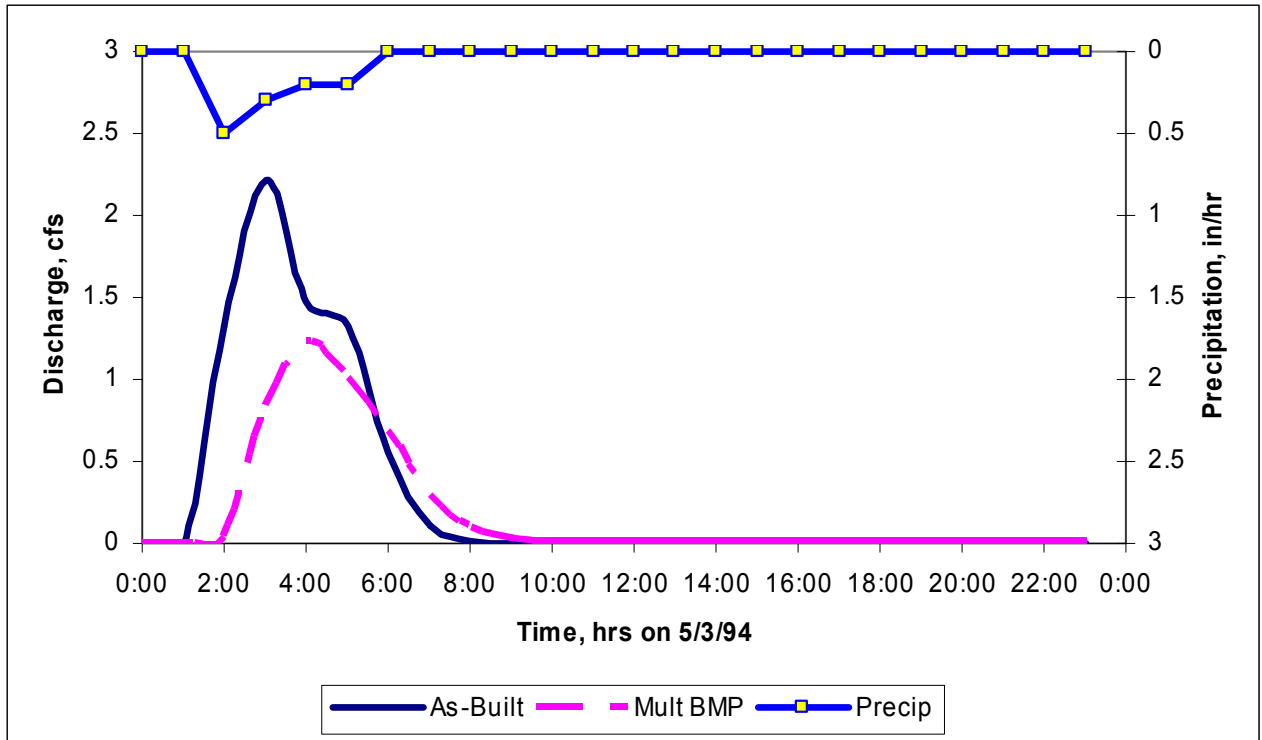


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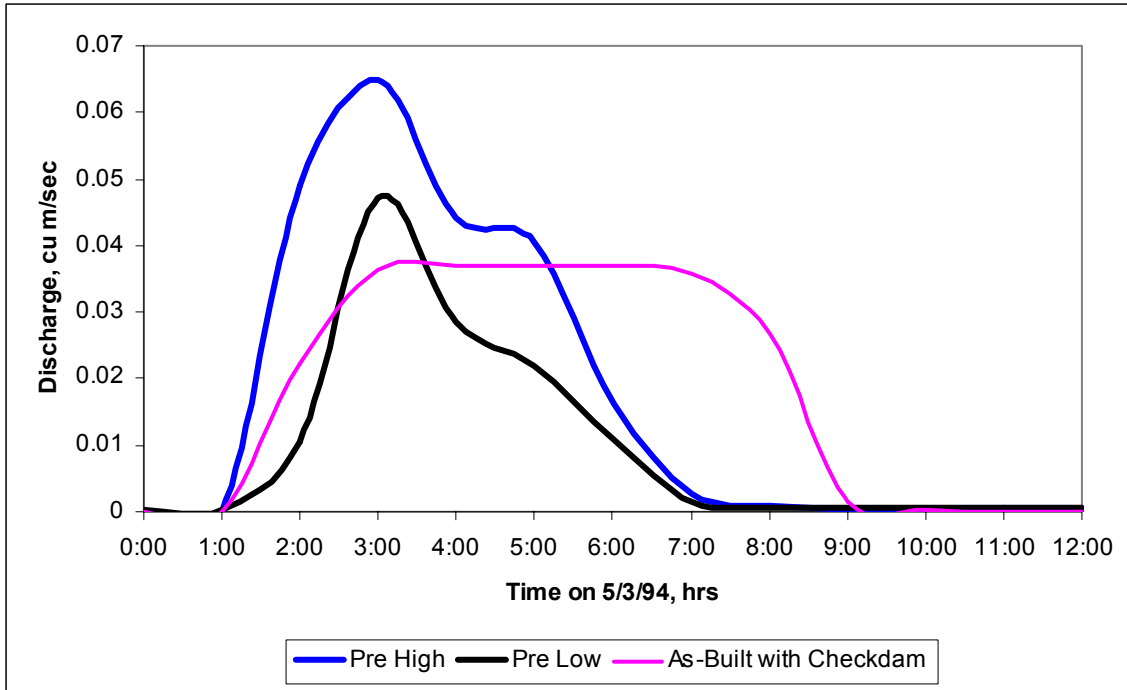


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