

# GROUND PROTECTION AND THE ENVIRONMENT:

HOLDING YOUR SITE ACCESS PARTNERS ACCOUNTABLE

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With any project, regulatory agencies, landowners, and the public will hold project managers responsible for the environmental impact. It's only right that site access suppliers and vendors be held equally responsible. A company that acts as a true site access partner can share the burden of accountability and provide solutions to boost your long-term environmental record.

More robust, shared accountability for the environment is more than the right thing to do. It can save time, money – and corporate reputations.



**Good environmental stewardship is simply good for business.**

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Carter Sterling, Chief Executive Officer, Sterling



# THE PAIN OF NON-COMPLIANCE

The negative impact of non-compliance can go far beyond paying fines. Non-compliance can easily delay a project, causing losses in profitability and missed deadlines.

Non-compliance can also lead to litigation, greatly increasing the legal costs on a project. What's more, poor practices could damage a company's reputation with regulatory agencies, such as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and state and local authorities, leading to increased scrutiny on current and future projects and a range of costly, additional requirements.



**The results of non-compliance of environmental regulations can have long-term consequences that go far beyond the current project.**

— Jon Keener, Environmental Compliance Manager, Sterling

## HOW YOU BENEFIT FROM GOOD COMPLIANCE

Virtue may be its own reward, but when it comes to good environmental stewardship, there may be additional benefits as well. For example, it's not uncommon for repeat violators to face more intense scrutiny by regulators and increased review times, costs, and other requirements. These additional requirements might include increased mitigation ratios, posting of performance bonds, or the placement of independent monitors at the site owner's expense. In contrast, a record of strong environmental stewardship may lead to benefits such as fewer

inspections, speedier permit review and issuance, and self-inspection and reporting privileges for future projects. These benefits can help avoid unexpected frustration and potentially costly delays.

Good environmental practices can also save money through reduced soil restoration costs and land-usage fees. Crop loss and productivity payments will be lower. Plus, what's good for the land might also be good for the equipment: environmentally sensitive access mats (such as Sterling's TerraLam® CLT mats) can reduce wear and tear on equipment and keep it stable.

"Project managers now have options that allow for temporary access with fewer impacts to the environment," says Robert Shemms, General Manager, Sterling Access Solutions. "And that can minimize the need for costly restoration efforts."

## SITE ACCESS PLANNING: KEY TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

### REGULATED ENVIRONMENTS

Many areas, such as wetlands and waterways, are protected by law. These areas are irreplaceable habitats for a variety of fish and wildlife, but beyond that they are a natural filtration system for our water supply and a highly effective aid in flood control. Special planning must be considered when access mats are used in these areas, not only to protect the land and water, but also to ensure that wildlife remains unharmed. For example, if not properly installed, access mats can prevent the natural movement of frogs, toads, snakes, and turtles. A trained access mat specialist will provide underpasses for these species so that their movement is not restricted.

### CULTURAL AND HISTORIC SITES

Solid environmental practices can help preserve historically and culturally significant sites, such as Native American burial grounds. Good access mat practices will protect the environment while reassuring the media, the public, and other concerned groups that the integrity of these sites is being respected and preserved.

### NON-REGULATED SITES

Even if an area is not protected by law, landowners, regulatory agencies, and the public still have a vested interest in protecting it. Parks, schools, cemeteries, and other public areas are important parts of a community. Private land, such as farms and ranches, often represent the livelihood of the landowner.



# CRITICAL QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SITE ACCESS PARTNER



☒ Does the site access partner truly understand the specifics of the project?

☒ Does the partner ask the right questions?

☒ Does the partner insist on reviewing all permits?

☒ What type of training has the partner provided for each employee working on the project?

☒ Have subcontractors been included in this training?

☒ Does the partner have contingency plans for unexpected events and situations?

☒ Does the partner have a corporate environmental policy?

☒ Does this policy include company-wide environmental management systems or processes?



# HOW TO AVOID CROSS- CONTAMINATION



Cross-contamination is the inadvertent introduction of a non-native species into a region. This contamination most often occurs when bacteria and other microorganisms are transferred from one location to another. Other forms of cross-contamination include transferring plants, animals, and insects. The introduction of non-native, potentially invasive species can have serious long-term environmental consequences. Native species can be crowded out or, in some cases, diseases can be introduced that will cause widespread destruction of native plants or animals.

It is everyone's responsibility to mitigate the risks of cross-contamination, and the site access partner can play a critical role. Your partner should clean all mats before they are moved to the project site. A highly capable partner will also have a mobile cleaning system that can remove debris that could contain microorganisms, seeds, spores, and other potential contamination hazards onsite.

Insects, such as ash borers, can be especially destructive. If the mats have been made from ash, only locally sourced ash should be used. It is important that all the bark (which is where ash borers hide) has been removed.



*"Emerald ash borer" by US Dept. of Agriculture, used under CC BY 2.0.*



*"Detail of Emerald Ash Borer damage" by: John Hritz, used under CC BY 2.0.*



**Through intent and innovation, we are dispelling the myth that favorable environmental practices, like reducing your carbon footprint, are inherently more expensive.**

— Carter Sterling, Chief Executive Officer

# REDUCING THE CARBON FOOTPRINT OF ACCESS MATS

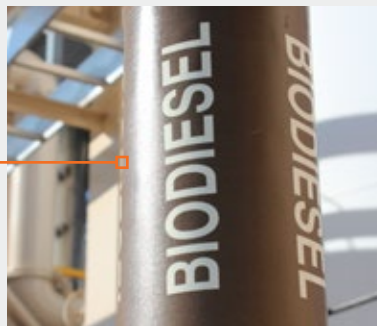
The carbon footprint of a project is a measurement of the amount of harmful carbon dioxide or other carbon compounds emitted into the atmosphere by all the activities surrounding that project.

A site access partner can reduce the total carbon footprint of a project by reducing the truckloads of matting delivered to a site, which in turn decreases the amount of carbon emissions released. Not only will this help reduce the total carbon footprint of a project, it will cut down on transportation costs. Your site access partner can accurately match the proper matting to the application or suggest lighter, strong matting products.

# CONSIDER THE ENTIRE LIFECYCLE OF ACCESS MATS

When evaluating the environmental impact of access mats, it is important to consider the entire lifecycle of the mat — from initial tree harvesting through final disposal. Is your site access partner providing high-quality, well-constructed mats? That matters, because one important benefit of well-constructed mats is that they can be used on a series of projects. This will help control waste and reduce the number of trees that need to be cut.

It is also important to keep as much material as possible out of landfills. After the mats have reached the end of their useful life, they can be reused in a variety of ways, including being ground for mulch, used for livestock bedding, or even becoming a component of bio-fuel.



*"Biodiesel Plan" by United Soybean Board, used under CC BY 2.0.*



*Livestock photo by: Bonnie Kittle on Unsplash*



*"Mulch" by: Christine and Hagen Graf, used under CC BY 2.0.*

## INNOVATION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT: TERRALAM® MATS

Sterling's revolutionary TerraLam® 300/500 CLT mats are engineered to be lighter, faster, and longer lasting to help meet environmental stewardship goals.

Made with sustainable, farm-raised southern yellow pine



Requires up to 50% fewer emission-producing deliveries



Maximizes strength while displacing load for less weight on sensitive environments such as wetlands



Easier to clean, with less chance of cross-contamination



Faster installation and removal means less time is spent in sensitive environments



## TERRALAM®

LIGHTER | FASTER | LONGER LASTING





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# CONCLUSION

Good environmental practices help protect fragile environments, but the benefits go far beyond the obvious. By working to preserve diverse ecosystems, protect native plants and animals, and reduce carbon emissions, not only will the environment be protected, but project costs and regulatory concerns will be diminished on the current and future projects.

Maintaining responsible ground protection procedures is **everyone's responsibility**. As such, project managers can, and should, expect their site access partner to follow best practices at all times. It's good for the environment – and **good for business**.

# ABOUT STERLING

Sterling is a leading provider of innovative site access solutions for companies that build our nation's energy infrastructure. We are America's largest manufacturer of CLT (cross-laminated timber) site access mats. Our TerraLam® CLT is an engineered matting solution that saves time and money, protects the environment, and ensures worker safety. TerraLam is manufactured on state-of-the-art automated equipment at our Illinois and Texas facilities for maximum consistency and quality. Our innovative matting products, combined with expert consultation and an array of turnkey services, deliver exceptional value on any size project and lay the groundwork for your success.

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CONTACT US

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