Self Cleaning Trash Screens for Irrigation Water

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The Problem

Irrigation water from open ditches carries trash that blows in, grows in, washes in, and collects in the ditches. The trash plugs up siphon tubes, gated pipe gates, and sprinkler nozzles. Plugged tubes, gates, and nozzles cause skips and poor water distribution, and force irrigators to recheck their water sets often. Weed seeds from upstream fields and ditch banks also spread with the water across fields.

Screening out trash from irrigation water is easy. However, manually keeping trash screens clean requires constant attention. Water-driven mechanical trash screens have been used in open ditches for many years. However, mechanical devices in dirty irrigation water requires regular maintenance and often end up as part of the problem rather than the solution.

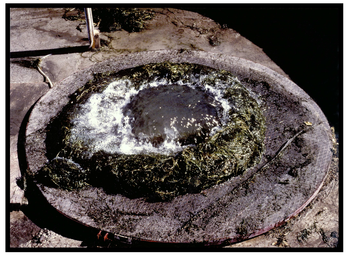
Mechanical screens are often maintenance problems.

Plugged gates cause uneven watering and skips.

Typical irrigation water trash.

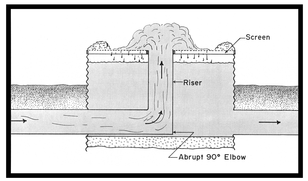
Turbulent Fountain "Bubbler" Screens for Piped Water

Accumulated trash must be periodically cleared away from the edges of the screen.

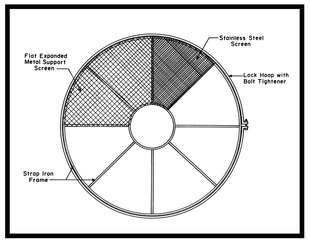


Pond weed accumulated on a bubbler screen. Pond weed is difficult to move off a screen. Perforated screen is smoother and works better with moss and pond weed.

Bubbler Screen Construction



Cross section of a bubbler screen built from a corrugated pipe with a poured concrete base.



Detail of Bubbler Screen construction.

- Use a sharp bend into the riser such as a welded 90 degree "miter" bend or a blocked-off tee, rather than a curved elbow fitting. Make the riser at least 2 feet long to evenly distribute the flow from the end.
- Maintain at least 2½ ft/sec water velocity in the riser. The table below shows required riser sizes. Constricting orifices inserted over the end of the riser can maintain the required velocity when flows decrease.
- Use about 20 mesh stainless steel screen. This screen will remove the larger weed seeds but still will pass the silt. Screens clogged with calcium deposits can be cleaned with a weak acid such as Muratic.

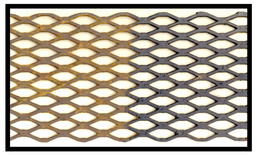
Recommended Dimensions

Flow Rate (cfs)	Riser Size (inches)	Screen Diameter (in.)	Screen Diameter (ft.)
1	50	8	4
2	100	10	5
3	150	12	5
4	200	15	6

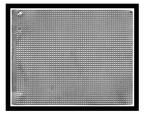
Bubbler Screens and Overfall Screens both require at least 8 inches of head loss or drop in the water surface to operate properly. Sometimes sufficient head can be gained by piping the water for a couple hundred feet.

If sufficient head cannot be generated, a mechanical screen must be used.

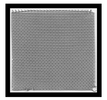
Screen Materials



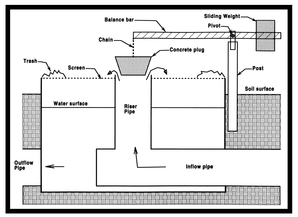
Expanded metal support screen.



Perforated, stainless steel screen.



Woven, 20 mesh, stainless steel screen.



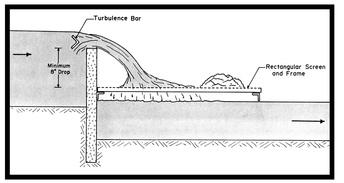
A suspended-plug turbulence generator for fountain screens, which helps to maintain turbulence at low-flow conditions. The sliding weight is used to adjust the effective weight of the plug.

Horizontal Screens for Ditch Water

Turbulent water falling on a horizontal screen will keep the trash washed off. Turbulence is critical. Water discharging from the end of a pipe or over a weir or check usually does not have enough turbulence to keep a screen clean. However, a bar in flow spread across a check or weir causes "vortex shedding" and creates enough turbulence. Water discharging with enough velocity vertically from a pipe also has enough turbulence. These concepts are the basis for these self-cleaning horizontal and turbulent fountain trash screens.

Turbulent self-cleaning screens were developed by the USDA - Agricultural Research Service in Kimberly, Idaho. Over 500 of these screens are being used by farmers in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon.

Overfall Screen in an irrigation lateral check/drop structure.



Cross section of an Overfall Screen below a check in a ditch showing an angle iron turbulence bar. Overfall screens can also be placed below temporary checks in concrete ditches.

Angle iron turbulence bar increases turbulence in the flow.

Large Overfall Screen at the sump inlet for several center pivot systems.

Horizontal Overflow Screens can be placed below canal gates.

A rotating electric-powered bicycle wheel screen at a canal gate entrance.