

Oil-Water Separators

With numbers ranging in the thousands, Oil Water Separators (OWS) can be found from wash racks to motor pools helping the Army stop contaminants resulting from vehicle wash off from flowing back into the ground water.

Mike Kanowitz/ Wastewater Program Manager/ USAEC

Sediment, oils, and lubricants are considered pollutants because they can basically inhibit or impact fish life. They make streams and rivers unswimmable, non-recreational, or they can create all sorts of health issues to the public or fish life.

Jesse McGill/ Environmental Correspondent

As important as they are to our environment, Oil water separators are difficult to maintain. They can't tell the difference between rainwater and normal use.

Mike House/ OWS Program Manager

As you can see we're in the kind of a middle of a Kentucky rainstorm here, which also will add to the filling up of this Oil water separators. Rainwater is no different; it comes right on through here like everything else.

In gravity based separators, the contaminated water flows so slowly through the OWS, roughly 10 gallons per hour, that the sediment drops to the bottom allowing oil to rise to the surface and is then collected in a bowl. In a mechanical OWS, the contaminants are physically pushed out of the water. The water is then sent to a treatment facility for final processing.

The clean water act of 1977 prohibits any discharge of Pollutants to our surface waters. The Army's stance on this has gone above and beyond upholding this standard.

Environmental stewardship is part of keeping our soldiers combat ready. What an oil water separator means to Soldiers is it keeps their equipment clean and provides them with a healthy environment to train. This all ensures that our Soldiers are a relevant and ready force.

Jesse McGill, Alexandria, Virginia