



CUSTER COUNTY HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

25365 US HWY 385

CUSTER, SD 57730

Phone: 605-673-5678

Fax: 605-673-5879

Why do we pull in-slopes? (aka "pulling ditches")

Believe it or not this is a pretty common practice in routine gravel road maintenance. With traffic, erosion, plowing snow, and time; our roads get wider and wider. Wide roads are tough to maintain, give motorists a sense they can go faster, and are simply not necessary. So, occasionally, depending on conditions we use a motor grader to pull all the material from the edge of the road and the slope of the ditch into the center of the road. Once the material is placed in the center of the road we mulch the material to break up clumps and plant material. Yes, it's inconvenient for everyone while this process is being done and like any road project it takes some time. Keep in mind that it took years and years for the material to get pushed to the outer edges of the roadway and the fix to that isn't accomplished in one day. Pulling the in-slopes re-forms the ditches, re-claims lost gravel and fines, and re-shapes the road so we have proper crown and better drainage.

An unfortunate by-product of this process is the pine cones, needles, sticks, and yes, rocks. With time and traffic, the plant material simply blows away leaving us the road material where it needs to be, in the road, not the ditch. I estimate between 500-1000 tons per mile of gravel is reclaimed by pulling in-slopes. Right now we are paying \$6.39 per ton for gravel so it's quite a tax savings to do this rather than hauling more gravel. In other words, the material lying in the ditch is everyone's tax dollars that aren't being used properly.

An answer to: "why the rocks?"

In places we put 6+ inches of material in the road then go over it with a ridge mulcher to grind all the material up leaving a strip of "tilled" material in the road while still leaving a clear lane on either side of that. After mulching is complete, the crew walks the road and throws the larger rocks off the road surface. As traffic drives down that center material, rocks that we miss or don't see, get worked to the surface. The road may require another blading or two to mix all the reclaimed material and put a finish on the road.

Jess Doyle
Custer County Highway Superintendent