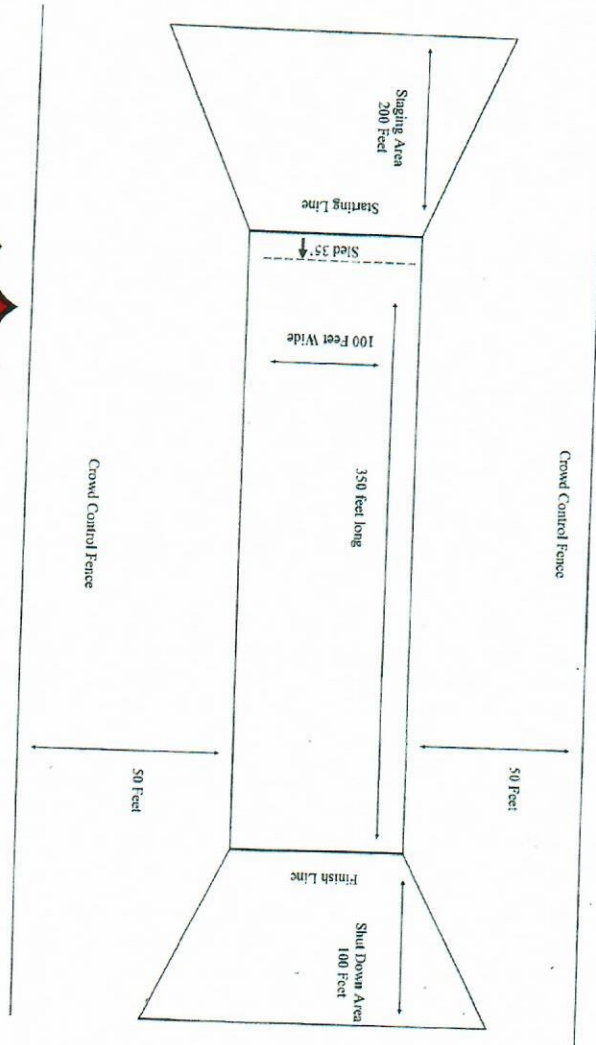


# Building & Maintaining a Pulling Track

By Zach Bender



Recommended Optimum Pull Track Area ©



## Building and Maintaining a Pulling Track:

This is how the track is prepared and cared for at Hillsboro, Wisconsin for the Hillsboro Charity Tractor Pull. These techniques have worked well for us and should be able to serve as a guideline for others. Track Material and Weather also play a big part in track prep and maintenance and will vary from track to track. Track uniformity and consistency is the goal you want to achieve for a successful pull.

Prep work should start no less than 7 days before the tractor pull with 10 to 14 days before the pull being ideal. All of this is dependent on the weather conditions and the amount of precipitation received in the recent months or weeks before the pull.

The track needs to be worked daily during this time frame to incorporate water into the track material until the proper track consistency is reached. After that work the track just to maintain that consistency maybe every 2 or 3 days, again depending on the weather conditions. It works best to work the track in the evenings so that when the water is applied it has time to soak in instead of evaporating. Over a 7 to 14 day period it may take well over 50,000 gallons of water to bring a track up to its proper consistency, depending on the track material and how dry the weather has been.

Having the proper equipment is crucial to building a good pulling track. A motor grader is a must, one with a scarifier is beneficial but not necessarily needed if a good chisel plow is available. The motor grader is essential for mixing the material,



Incorporating the water, and moving material where needed to fix low spots and high spots in the track. The motor grader may also be needed during the pull to repair the starting line.

Consistent water application is a must! A 4000 gallon Husky manure tank mounted on a truck works well, or something similar, and water application can be varied by the speed of the truck, and the spread pattern needs to be even and constant every time.



**Chisel Plow and Field Finisher:** The chisel plow is used to do the primary tillage of the track if a scarifier is not available, the chisel plow opens the track up so when the water is applied it soaks in, we often will run the chisel plow back through the track shortly after a load of water is applied to the track to help mix and incorporate the water. The field finisher is used to help bust up clods, level the chisel plowed track, and mix the top surface of the track. The field finisher is usually run after the chisel plow.

**Packers:** A wobble wheel roller is the best, a pull type works best when first rolling the track back together, self-propelled wobble wheels have a tough time in tacky clay that hasn't been packed at least once. When first rolling a track back in, don't think it's a race, if your roller is bouncing down the track putting the track back together chances are the pulling vehicles will be bouncing down the track during the pull.

**Scraper/leveler & Tractor:** The scraper/leveler is used during the building of the track to help prepare the pulling surface, it is also used during the pull to put the track back together after each pulling vehicle makes its pass. It doesn't take a 200 H.P. 4 wheel drive to pull one of these. A smaller (70-100 H.P.) 2WD tractor works best, something quick, nimble, and with good visibility. The scrapers should also have the ability to apply water through the means of a spray bar with sprayer nozzles, pump, and water tank.



**Working the track for the first time:**

**Start with the motor grader and scarifier, run the scarifier just a little deeper than the chisel plow, I scarify every time before chisel plowing. When scarifying you can judge how hard the track is and how dry the track is by how hard it works the motor grader. Following the motor grader, you will then chisel plow the track. If a scarifier is not available a chisel plow will do. Care should be taken when doing both of these steps if there is rock or other unwanted material buried beneath the pulling surface.**





Once the track is opened up it's time to add water. Spray Adjuvant, added to the water, about 2.5 gallons per 4000 gallon load, will help bind the clay and keep the dust down. This can be done to every third load of water applied to the track. If the track is extremely dry, put the whole load of water on the track at once, but this depends on the width of the track, 4000 gallons may be too much for a one lane track. Water application takes good judgment and a knowledge of your track material. Shortly after the 1st water application the chisel plow should be run through the track to help mix the track material. Keep applying water and working the moisture in until the right consistency of your track material is reached. If your area has been dry it may take several days of adding water and incorporating it into the track material.

The motor grader works well for mixing the material, after water application to the track, run the field finisher through the track a time or two, then use the motor grader to windrow the material



and then spreading it back over the track. The depth of cut depends a lot upon the size of motor grader you have and how much material it can push. On a two lane track work only half the track at one time, because your windrow can get quite large and unmanageable. One day work the track from the middle to the outside edges, the next day work the track from the edges to the middle. This step helps make the moisture in the track material more consistent and uniform.



Once the track has been laid out with the grader, start packing the track with the wobble wheel, and following with the scraper until put back together.



As you get closer to the date of the tractor pull you should be able to use less water, and you will basically be just maintaining the moisture level in the track material until the pull.

#### Pull Time:

On the day of the pull the track should be worked no sooner than necessary. Ample help should be on hand to put the track back together in a timely fashion without rushing things yet being able to start the pull on time.

Start by digging the track, scarify with the motor grader if available, followed by the chisel plow, then the field finisher. Then apply water. This particular water application is crucial. This one can make or break the show, too much and you can have a muddy mess, too little and the track won't bind together and be too loose. If your show is during the day or in the evening makes a big difference on how much water is used also. At night moisture tends to come back up through the track, during the day the sun can dry the track out rather quickly. This is where knowing your track and track material helps you judge on how much water to apply.



After water application, run through the track with the field finisher at least two times. Following the field finisher the motor

grader should be used. Roll the track material back and forth one time, on a 2 lane track work ½ the track at a time starting from the outside working to the center then back to the outside. As soon as the motor grader is working the finishing pass the wobble wheels and scrapers can start in rolling the track back down. It normally takes about two to three times across the track with the wobble wheels to pack the track back in. Don't over pack, and it may be necessary to apply water with the scrapers during this time, especially if it is an afternoon pull or early in the evening to keep the track from drying out before the pull starts. It's then advisable to take the motor grader and lightly skim or shave the top of the pulling surface to create a nice smooth pulling surface, this can then be followed by one quicker pass with the roller and scrapers. Your track should then be ready for your pull.



## Track Maintenance after your pull:

After your event the track should be worked one final time, the track should be dug, then the motor grader used to fix any low spots or dips created by the pull. Then a crown should be put on the track to help with water drainage. A cover crop such as Winter Rye should be planted in early September to help prevent erosion and adds organic material back to the tracks material. A cover crop will also help suppress unwanted weeds. This can then be sprayed off in early summer and you will be ready for next year's pulling event.

