Drainage Water Management (554)

Drainage water management is the process of managing water discharges from surface and/or subsurface agricultural drainage systems with water-control structures.

Practice Information

The purpose of regulating water in a drainage system is to manage moisture by controlling the outflow of drainage water. This practice applies to areas where drainage is needed during certain periods and where it is advantageous to limit the outflow, at other times, when the moisture can be utilized by crops or when wet conditions are needed to conserve organic material (organic soils). This practice is especially applicable in highly permeable soils that have a low available water capacity and in organic soils that tend to subside when soil-moisture conditions are favorable for decomposition of organic material.

Management is based upon the time and stage of water held in ditches, pumping schedules, and coordination of these items with rainfall, season, crop needs, and soil requirements. In-field water table observation points may be used to determine the relationship of the control elevation settings relative to critical field water table depths.

Common Associated Practices

Drainage Water Management (554) is commonly applied with conservation practices, such as Structure for Water Control (587); Subsurface Drain (606); Surface Drainage, Main, or Lateral (608); Pumping Plant (533); Vertical Drain (630); Water and Sediment Control Basin (638); Dike (356); and Critical Area Planting (342).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.

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