

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Terrace (600)

A terrace is an earth embankment, channel, or a combination of ridge and channel constructed across a slope to intercept runoff.

Practice Information

This practice generally applies to cropland but may also be used on other areas where field crops are grown, such as wildlife or recreation lands.

Terraces can be installed to reduce the slope length for erosion control, intercept and conduct runoff to a safe outlet, trap sediment, retain runoff for moisture conservation, prevent gully development, and alter the land surface to improve farmability.

A variety of terrace configurations have been developed as a result of research and field experience. Four common types of terrace include:

- broad-based—farmed on both sides and used on more uniform gently sloping fields;
- steep backslope—a steep downstream slope in permanent cover;
- narrow-based—steep on both sides and have permanent cover planted on both sides;
- flat channel or level—used to conserve moisture as well as control erosion.

Terraces require careful design, layout, and construction to provide erosion control while maintaining farmability. Terraces may be parallel on fairly uniform terrain or vary from



parallel when the terrain is undulating. Since parallel terraces are usually preferred, designs often provide for cuts and fills to improve terrace alignment.

This practice has a minimum expected life of 10 years. The operation and maintenance plan includes inspection and repair of the terraces and outlets, maintenance of terrace height and vegetation, and removal of accumulated sediment. Inspections will be done periodically and after major storm events.

Common Associated Practices

A Terrace (600) must have a safe outlet to convey the runoff water to a point where it will not cause damage. Commonly used conservation practices include Grassed Waterway (412), Underground Outlet (620), and Subsurface Drain (606).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.