

**CONNECTICUT INSTRUCTION 300-398: INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDANCE FOR
PLANNING AND CONTRACTING CONSERVATION PRACTICE 560, ACCESS ROAD,
UNDER NRCS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

1. DEFINITION, PURPOSE, AND CONDITIONS OF CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD (CPS) 560, ACCESS ROAD

Per Connecticut NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, an access road is defined as an established route for equipment and vehicles. The purpose is to provide a fixed route for vehicular travel for resource activities involving the management of timber, livestock, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and other conservation enterprises. This practice applies where access is needed from a private or public road or highway to a land use enterprise or conservation measure, or where access is needed in a planned land use area.

Rehabilitation of existing roads should be planned, when appropriate, as the least-cost alternative before planning a new road scenario, see ***“Access Road – Rehabilitation vs. New Road Scenarios.”***

2. APPLICABILITY

This instruction does not apply where the extent of a new road, or rehabilitation of an existing road, is required under a Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan (CNMP), regardless of the land use. When documented in the CNMP, and supported by the I&E, there will be no practice payment cap applied, and no waiver is required.

In all other instances, practice payment for *Access Road (560)* will be capped at

- \$15,000 on all land uses and for all types of Access Road when the contract participant has not self-certified as Historically Underserved (HU).
- \$18,000 on all land uses and for all types of Access Road when the contract participant has self-certified as any of the HU participant types and thereby qualifies for 90% payment rates. (Beginning Farmer, Socially Disadvantaged, Limited Resource and Veteran Farmer – who also qualify as BF or SD).

The practice payment cap applies to rehabilitation scenarios, as well as new road scenarios.

3. INSTRUCTIONS FOR PLANNING CPS 560, ACCESS ROAD

All extents of *Access Road (560)* must meet Connecticut Standards and follow Connecticut NRCS design and check data requirements. An operation and maintenance plan must be provided to the participant. (Available on CT eFTOG).

Access Road (560) on Forestland:

When necessary, and if addressing a resource concern, *Access Road (560)* may be included in a contract when required for log truck access to the closest log landing. Any new required access, beyond the closest log landing, should be planned under *Forest Trails and Landings (655)*. A practice payment cap must be applied to the access road as described in Section 2.

- When it is necessary to plan *Access Road (560)* as part of crossing streams or wetlands, no waiver request is necessary. The planner should clearly document the minimum extent needed to complete the stream/wetland crossing in their conservation assistance notes.

Access Road (560) on all Other Land Uses (Cropland, Pasture, Farmstead, Associated Ag Land):

Access Road (560) on all other land uses may be planned to address resource concerns or facilitate another

conservation practice to address resource concerns. Access road maintenance is part of normal farm operation and maintenance, but in instances where significant resource concerns are caused by an eroding existing access road, rehabilitation or re-alignment may be planned to achieve conservation objectives. Extents that would exceed the practice payment cap may be eligible for a waiver.

Re-Routing Existing Access Road

In instances where an existing road needs to be re-routed to avoid sensitive areas, the existing road must be closed using *Road/Trail/Landing Closure and Treatment (654)*.

Access Road – Rehabilitation vs. New Road Scenarios

Rehabilitation scenarios are applicable where the condition of the road is existing, but dilapidated. The damaged portions of the road may be repaired to meet Connecticut standards and follow Connecticut NRCS design and check data requirements.

4. PRACTICE PAYMENT CAP - CONTRACTING

In most cases, all lengths of the access road (new and rehabilitation) should be planned under a single contract item. Planners may include multiple components, if necessary, to contract different scenarios because of site conditions. The practice payment cap would then be applied to the single contract item. Payment may only be made at the practice level (no partial payments). Conservation plan maps should explicitly identify the location and extent of road when planned in sections.

When there is more than one distinct access road (for instance, to provide access from different public roads to separate log landing areas), each access road should be planned in separate contract items and the practice payment cap would be applied to each contract item.

Any extent of access road may be planned, if determined to be necessary by staff with Job Approval Authority (JAA). However, payment in ProTracts will be limited to the amount allowed under the cap. The participant is responsible for the remainder of any necessary payment.

A waiver to this guidance is available. A written request for a waiver from the planner should be made to the state conservation engineer (SCE), who will review the request and the circumstances. The planner is responsible to supply the SCE with enough information to make a recommendation.

The SCE will forward the request, with the SCE recommendation (concur or deny) to the state conservationist for final decision. (*See attached SCE recommendation and STC approval*).