United States Department of Agriculture

Conservation Practice Overview

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Hillside Ditch (Code 423)

A hillside ditch is a channel that has a supporting ridge on the lower side, constructed across the slope at defined gradient and horizontal or vertical interval, with or without a vegetative barrier.

Practice Information

A hillside ditch will safely control the flow of water by diverting runoff from upland sloping areas to a stable outlet.

This practice applies to sites where—

- The topography is steeply sloping.
- Surface flow is damaging sloping upland.
- There is sufficient soil depth for construction.

Do not use a hillside ditch to provide protection to buildings, roads, or other improvements.

A hillside ditch helps control erosions on steep cropland by diverting runoff to a protected outlet. The hillside ditches are installed at designed vertical intervals down the slope and at non-erosive grades within the channels. Adequate outlets for runoff water are required before installing the hillside ditches. An outlet may be a grade control structure, a natural or constructed waterway, a stable watercourse, or a stable disposal area such as a well-established pasture.

A hillside ditch will require maintenance over the expected life of the practice.

Common Associated Practices

The Conservation Practice Standard (CPS) Hillside Ditch (Code 423) is frequently associated with CPSs Grassed Waterway (Code 412), Lined Waterway or Outlet (Code 468), Underground Outlet (Code 620), Grade Stabilization Structure (Code 410), and Critical Area Planting (Code 342).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.