



United States Department of Agriculture

CRP Practice CP8A

Grassed waterway

Natural Resources Conservation Service - Indiana – March 2016 (ver. 1.3)

Grassed Waterway Program Job Sheet



Photo Courtesy of USDA, NRCS

WHAT IS A GRASSED WATERWAY?

A grassed waterway is a natural or constructed channel that is shaped or graded to required dimensions and established with suitable vegetation.

Grassed waterways are used to convey runoff from concentrated flow without causing soil erosion, to control gully erosion, and/or to protect and improve water quality. Depending on the type of vegetation established, grassed waterways may also provide wildlife habitat for a variety of “farmland” wildlife such as quail, pheasants, and rabbits.

WHERE THE PRACTICE APPLIES

On fields that meet eligibility requirements for the Conservation Reserve program (CRP) as determined by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

CRP POLICY

Grassed waterways will be designed and installed according to the Grassed Waterway Standard (412) in the local Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG).

The width of the grassed waterway depends upon several factors including the slope of the field, the soil type, the drainage area, and the conservation practices used in the field.

For the Conservation Reserve Program, grassed waterways will be installed to meet the minimum design criteria needed to convey water from a field, according to the FOTG, regardless of the purpose of the grassed waterway. If requested by the producer, the enrolled width may be up to 2 times the minimum design standard, not to exceed a maximum width of

100 feet. CRP grassed waterways will not exceed a maximum width of 100 feet for any purpose.

Each CRP grassed waterway must have a stable outlet.

Only the portion of CRP grassed waterways located on eligible cropland are eligible for cost-share and rental payments, except the stable outlet can be immediately adjacent to the grassed waterway and eligible cropland. Depending on the site, the best technical location for the stable outlet may be located on land that is not eligible for CRP. In these cases, CRP financial payments are not eligible on the stable outlet nor on the portions of the CRP grassed waterway not on eligible cropland.

See the design for specific construction specifications.

PLANTING

Plant the vegetation according to the attached plans/specifications. Any changes to these specifications must be approved by NRCS.

All construction and seeding must be completed within 12 months of contract approval to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner’s control prohibit completion within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next construction and planting season.

Vegetation selected for the grassed waterway will be adapted to the site conditions and meet the standards in the local FOTG. Only viable, high quality seed will be used.

No-Till seeding: Use a no-till drill to reduce the risk of erosion and possible loss of seedlings. Ensure the drill is designed to handle the seed being planted (especially important for native grasses). Your local Soil and Water Conservation Districts may be able to assist in locating equipment. Set the drill to provide an ideal planting depth of no more than ¼ inch unless otherwise directed. Seeding native grasses deeper than ¼ inch will lead to potential failure. Soils that are too wet or too dry can also cause improper seed placement.

Conventional Seeding: Use a drill with 7” or less row spacing or a culti-packer seeder, designed for the seed to be planted. The seedbed should be worked to a minimum depth of three (3) inches and firmed before seeding. Grass seed should be drilled uniformly and seeded no more than 1/2 inch deep.

Broadcast Seeding: Seed may be broadcast if completed in a uniform manner. Pre-mixing the seed with 200 lbs. per acre of pelletized lime and utilizing an airflow applicator is also effective. Seedbeds should be worked to a minimum depth of three (3) inches and firmed before seeding. The seedbed should be culti-packed before and after seeding. It is acceptable to see up to 1/3 of the seed on the soil surface. Wind speed should be 15 m.p.h. or less when broadcasting.

Weed Control During Establishment Period: Mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted vegetation until a **Final** Status Review is issued, or for a maximum of 3 years after planting. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a height above the planted vegetation. **Apply all herbicides according to the label.**

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The plan should contain the practices necessary for maintenance of a vigorous sod and brush control. At a minimum, maintenance should occur at least every other year to maintain a vigorous sod and to control brush.

For CRP, after NRCS determines the waterway vegetation is fully established (i.e. – after the **Final** Status Review), **MOWING** and other maintenance activities are not allowed between April 1 and August 1 to protect ground-nesting wildlife. However, if determined necessary, the FSA County Committee (COC) may approve spot treatment of weeds during the nesting season. The FSA County Committee **must** approve the maintenance activity **prior to** the activity occurring.

Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.

The grassed waterway should be inspected on a seasonal basis and following major storm and runoff events. Any damages or sediment accumulation that would adversely impair the function of the waterway must be corrected immediately.

The drainage area above the grassed waterway must be protected against erosion to the extent that expected sedimentation will not shorten the planned effective life of the grassed waterway. Consider such practices as Cover Crops, No-Till/Strip Till, Conservation Crop Rotation, Contour Farming, etc.

For CRP, do not use grassed waterways as a travel way, cropland headland, or a lane for livestock or farm equipment.

The grassed waterway will not be harvested for hay or grazed by domestic livestock for the life of the CRP contract, unless authorized. Cost-share is not authorized for fencing.

MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

All CRP contracts must include scheduled mid-term contract management activities that are site specific and will ensure plant diversity, wildlife habitat, and protection of soil and water resources. For grassed waterways, only inter-seeding, preceded by close mowing or prescribed burning (according to an approved burn plan), if needed, applies. All management activities must be performed according to NRCS Standards and CRP policy.

CONSIDERATIONS

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid impacts to the surrounding land.

For optimum wildlife habitat, consider establishing grasses such as big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, and/or switchgrass; wildlife-friendly non-native grasses and legumes such as timothy, redtop, orchardgrass, clovers, and/or alfalfa; and/or shrubs on the periphery of the grassed waterway. The portions of the waterway conveying the majority of the water can be seeded to faster-growing sod-type grasses which are typically considered good for erosion control but poor for wildlife habitat such as tall fescue.

GRASSED WATERWAY DESIGN WORKSHEET CRP CP-8A

Name: Farm: Tract: Field: Date:

REQUIREMENTS

Average Width of all Reaches: Total Length: TOTAL ACRES:

Design and Planting Considerations:

Shaping (see attached Engineering Designs)
Seeding (see attached Specifications)

Soil Type(s):
Average Slope:

Post-Planting Maintenance

Mowing: BEFORE final Status Review, or up to three (3) years after planting, mow to a minimum height of six (6) to eight (8) inches high when the weeds are 12 inches taller than the planted grasses as needed

*AFTER final Status Review, mow to a minimum height of six (6) to eight (8) inches

Herbicide* (per label):

Other:

*NOTE: After the final Status Review has been issued, weed control and other maintenance activities will not occur between April 1 and August 1, and will occur on a "spot" basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the FSA County Committee.

MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT - STARTING IN YEAR:

see the attached Mid Contract Management for Grassed Waterways Job Sheet for details

For CRP Mid-contract Management specifications

see: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/programs/?cid=stelprdb1119594>

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