

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

ANIMAL TRAILS AND WALKWAYS

(Ft.)  
Code 575



**DEFINITION**

Established lanes or travel ways that facilitate animal movement.

**PURPOSE**

- Provide or improve access to forage, water, working/handling facilities, and/or shelter,
- Improve grazing efficiency and distribution, and/or
- Protect ecologically sensitive, erosive and/or potentially erosive sites.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On lands where control of animal movement is needed.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

Plan and design animal trails and walkways to comply with Federal, state, and local laws and permit conditions and requirements. Obtain all necessary permits prior to construction or any land clearing activities.

Evaluate and avoid or minimize impact to cultural resources, wetlands and Federal and state protected species to the extent practicable

during planning, design and implementation of this conservation practice in accordance with established National and Florida policy, General Manual (GM) Title 420-Part 401; Title 450-Part 401, Title 190-Parts 410.22 and 410.26, National Planning Procedures Handbook (NPPH) Florida Supplements to Parts 600.1 and 600.6, National Cultural Resources Procedures Handbook (NCRPH), National Food Security Act Manual (NFSAM), and the National Environmental Compliance Handbook (NECH).

Construct animal trails or walkways of sufficient width to accommodate movement of animals and access by operator for management and maintenance.

Design and construct trails or walkways with consideration of site soil characteristics.

Construct trails or walkways in such a manner that accelerated erosion will not occur. Where necessary, provide diversions with a stable outlet or other water management practices to convey runoff and prevent erosion. Crown or outslope surface, as needed, to control direct runoff and prevent erosion.

Use Florida NRCS conservation practice standard Stream Crossing, Code 578 when animal trails or walkways cross streams or other shallow water bodies

Select surface material for trails and walkways based on the intended purpose and the sensitivity of the animal's feet.

If natural surfacing is used, protect trails or walkways seeded or planted to vegetative cover from grazing until the vegetation is fully established and capable of withstanding grazing and/or trampling. Establish vegetative cover in accordance with Florida NRCS conservation practice standard Critical Area Planting, Code 342. Where maintaining vegetative cover is necessary but not possible, use Florida NRCS conservation practice standard Heavy Use Area

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically, and updated if needed. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Protection, Code 561 to provide adequate surface protection.

Use Florida NRCS conservation practice standard Fence, Code 382 when needed to keep animals confined to the trail or walkway until the desired destination is reached.

**Additional Criteria Applicable to Provide or Improve Access to Forage, Water, Working/Handling Facilities and/or Shelter**

Design and construct trails and walkways with sufficient size to accommodate the expected frequency of use and animal type(s) planned for the operation with a minimum width of 10 feet.

Construct walkways to meet minimum height of 12 inches above the seasonal high water level.

When needed to facilitate movement of animals through a series of paddocks or pastures, design gate openings and lane layouts to allow for efficient movement of animals with the least amount of stress.

**Additional Criteria Applicable to Improve Grazing Efficiency and Distribution.**

Use fenced or unfenced animal trails or walkways to distribute grazing to overcome terrain features causing uneven grazing distribution and pressure.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Consider using Florida NRCS conservation practice standard Prescribed Grazing, Code 528 to further improve grazing distribution and pressure.

Consider using other Florida NRCS conservation practice standards, such as Access Control, Code 472 in conjunction with trails or walkways to minimize the impact on sensitive areas.

For areas of high livestock concentration, such as around ponds, tanks, troughs, or other feeding areas, consider using Florida NRCS conservation practice standard Heavy Use Area Protection, Code 561

Consider limiting width to prevent usage as a roadway. For travel ways used by vehicles or equipment for purposes other than management and maintenance of animal trails or walkways, consider using Florida conservation practice standard Access Road, Code 560.

Consider using water bars, culverts, or other measures to control and direct water flow.

When planning walkways for lactating dairy herds, consider placing watering facilities every 300 - 500 feet to help prevent reduction in milk production.

Construction, operation and maintenance of animal trails and walkways may increase water quantity and water quality problems. To avoid impact, consider the following items in the planning process.

Water Quantity

1. Effects of grading on runoff and surface storage.
2. Effect on the amount and timing of infiltration.
3. Impacts of impervious trails or walkways on increased surface runoff.

Water Quality

1. Effects on erosion and the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment attached substances carried by runoff.
2. Effects of construction and re-vegetating the site on runoff and erosion.
3. Effects on wetlands and wildlife habitat.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Prepare plans and specifications for installing animal trails or walkways that describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. Include construction plans, drawings, job sheets or other similar documents in the plans and specifications. As a minimum, include the following in the plans and specifications.

- Location of trail or walkway.
- Typical cross section of walkway showing dimensions.
- Details of surface treatment.
- Methods to handle runoff.
- Location of utilities and notification requirements.

Specify in these documents the requirements for installing the practice, including the location and the kind, amount, and quality of materials to be used.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

Specify in the operation and maintenance (O&M) plan that the trails or walkways and associated practices be inspected annually and after significant storm events to identify repair and maintenance needs.

Detail in the O&M plan the level of repairs needed to maintain the effectiveness and useful life of the practice. These repairs should include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Periodic grading or re-shaping trails or walkways to maintain the designed grade and dimensions, where needed.
- Periodic addition of surfacing materials where used.
- Re-seeding of areas in which the vegetation has been damaged or destroyed.
- Mending of fences and replacement of gates.

Address periodic removal and management of manure accumulations in the O&M plan.

For multiple adjacent vegetated walkways, provide guidance in the O&M plan as to the rotation of walkways to allow for recovery of

vegetation and for improvement of traffic - supporting conditions.

#### **REFERENCES**

Florida NRCS Conservation Practice Standards  
Access Control, Code 472  
Access Road, Code 560  
Critical Area Planting, Code 342  
Fence, Code 382  
Heavy Use Area Protection, Code 561  
Prescribed Grazing, Code 528  
General Manual (GM)  
Title 420-Part 401  
Title 450-Part 401  
Title 190-Parts 410.22 and 410.26  
National Cultural Resources Procedures Handbook  
National Environmental Compliance Handbook  
National Food Security Act Manual  
National Planning Procedures Handbook  
Florida Supplements to Parts 600.1 and 600.6