

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

RECREATION TRAIL AND WALKWAY

(ft.)
CODE 568

DEFINITION

A pathway for pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle and other off-road modes of travel through or to recreation resources.

PURPOSE

This practice may be applied as part of a resource management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

Provide or improve recreation access;

Provide travelways for recreational activities such as walking, horseback riding, bicycling, skiing, and snowmobiling;

Direct travel away from ecologically sensitive and/or erosion prone areas;

Minimize on-site and off-site damage to resources during periods of access.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On land areas where prepared paths, trails and walkways are needed for effective and safe recreation travel.

CRITERIA

Laws and Regulations. This practice must comply with all applicable federal, state, local and tribal laws and regulations. Laws and regulations of particular concern include those involving building codes, water and drainage rights, land use, zoning, land disturbance by construction, pollution control, property easements, wetlands, Waters of the United States, preservation of cultural resources, and endangered species.

General. Plants, landscaping timbers, traffic control measures, wooden walkways, grades, etc. shall be evaluated for effectiveness, aesthetics and accessibility.

The trail or walkway must compliment the overall recreation plan and aesthetically blend with the general landscape and surroundings.

The trail or walkway shall be configured to minimize adverse on-site and off-site impacts such as accelerated erosion, riparian zone degradation, stream bank and channel damage, hydrology modification or water resource damage, or damage to wildlife habitat, fragmentation, or restriction of wildlife movement.

Grade. Design grades considering purpose, location, topography, safety, and applicable regulations.

Width. Minimum trail or walkway width shall be four feet, except pedestrian trail width may be reduced to three feet in areas where greater width would adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas.

Side slopes. Slopes disturbed or created by this practice must be stable. Constructed earth side slopes must be 2:1 (horizontal:vertical) or flatter, except slopes to be mowed must be 3:1 or flatter

Drainage. Drainage measures must be stable, and of sufficient size, intervals, and gradient to ensure adequate drainage for the purpose.

Alignment. Curves are desirable in trails and walkways. Minimum radius for cycle trails is 15 feet.

Clearance. Except where speed limits and warnings are included, minimum height clearance is two feet above pedestrians, animal or cycle riders, vehicles, and vehicle users. Except where speed limits, warnings, and other safety measures are included,

Conservation practice standards are reviewed periodically and updated if needed. The current version of this standard is posted on our website at www.sd.nrcs.usda.gov or may be obtained at your local Natural Resources Conservation Service.

minimum edge clearance is two feet.

Bridges and Elevated Walkways. Bridges and elevated walkways shall be designed for the expected loading, but not less than 100 pounds per square foot of floor area. Effective handrails must be provided.

Surfacing. If surfacing is required for a firm, stable trail, the surfacing material shall be appropriate for the anticipated traffic and operational conditions.

Erosion control. Designs shall include erosion control. Erosion must be controlled as soon as practicable after construction. If use, soil or climatic conditions preclude the use of vegetation, and protection is needed, non-vegetative means, such as mulches or gravel, may be used. Seedbed preparation, seeding, fertilizing, and mulching shall be according to South Dakota Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Practice Standard Critical Area Treatment (342). Use vegetation adapted to the site that will accomplish the purpose. Preference shall be given to native plant species.

Safety. Animal and user safety shall be incorporated into the design. Adequate directional and warning signs, handrails, bridges, and culverts shall be placed as dictated by the site, purpose and applicable construction (building, etc.,) codes. Protection from slides, falling rocks, slick surfaces and crash hazards shall be provided, as needed.

CONSIDERATIONS

Assure safe ingress and egress to the trail or walkway.

Consider requirements of Americans with Disabilities Act, where appropriate.

Rest areas should be provided near special points of interest and to provide rest stops in steep areas. Natural features such as logs or rocks are desirable for use as benches when resting.

If switchbacks are included in alignment, consider including stone walls, shrubs, or other obstructions to discourage short cuts, and to protect lower level users from falling objects.

Nonchallenging pedestrian and equestrian trail and walkway grades should generally not exceed 10 percent. Grades for other uses may be steeper. Cross-country skiing may be as steep as 50 percent for difficult trails. Hiking trails may be as steep as 20 or 30 percent.

Assure adequate parking for users and an operation and maintenance staging area.

Long trails and walkways should have simple shelters spaced no further apart than 1.5 miles. Sanitary facilities should be placed at shelters and at ends of trails and walkways as necessary.

Consider saving and maintaining key trees and other vegetation that have scenic value, provide shade, reduce erosion and runoff, provide habitat for wildlife, and/or add to the visual quality of the area. Equipment travel or parking should not be allowed within an imaginary circle on the ground defined by the dripline of the crown of key trees.

Consider adjoining land uses and the proximity of residences, utilities, cultural resources, threatened and endangered species, wetlands, environmentally sensitive areas, areas of special scenic value, and farm/business operations.

Consider ecological and human impacts when planning a trail for use by motorized vehicles.

Any work in and/or discharges near streams, wetlands or water bodies may require a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, state water quality (permitting) authority, and/or local authority.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice must meet this standard and include requirements needed to achieve the purpose.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE (O&M)

An O&M Plan shall be prepared for and reviewed with the owner/operator. The plan shall specify that the treated areas and associated practices must be inspected annually and after significant storm events to identify repair and maintenance needs.