

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

**DRAINAGE WATER MANAGEMENT**

(Ac.)  
Code 554



**DEFINITION**

Control of water surface elevations and discharge from surface and subsurface drainage systems.

**PURPOSES**

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

- Improve water quality.
- Improve the soil environment for vegetative growth.
- Reduce the rate of oxidation of organic soils.
- Prevent wind erosion.
- Enable seasonal shallow flooding.

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies to areas where:

- The topography is relatively smooth, uniform and flat to gently sloping.

- A water table may be maintained without excessive seepage and without having an adverse impact on adjoining properties.

**General Criteria Applicable To All Purposes**

All planned work shall comply with all Federal, state, and local laws and regulations. Plans for water control structures may need to be permitted by the appropriate Water Management District (WMD) and comply with the appropriate WMD rules contained in Chapter 40-4 Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Environmental Resource Permits: Surface Water Management Systems; Chapter 40-40 F.A.C., Standard General Environmental Resource Permits: Regulation of Stormwater Management Systems; Chapter 40-41 F.A.C., Environmental Resource Permits: Surface Water Management Basin Criteria; Chapter 40-42 F.A.C., Environmental Resource Permits: Regulation of Stormwater Management Systems; Chapter 40-44 F.A.C., Environmental Resource Permits: Regulation of Agricultural Surface Water Management Systems.

The system shall be designed to remove the water required for adequate drainage. The rate of outflow and the level of the water table shall be controlled by structures or pumps. Water velocities in the soil near the drain shall be kept slow enough to prevent soil particles from entering the drainage system.

Structures and pumps shall be located where they are accessible and subject to convenient control. Designs of critical components shall be in accordance with pertinent NRCS conservation practice standards.

For crops that are highly sensitive to excessive or inadequate soil water conditions, the field surface must be smooth, and the distance between the soil water level and the ground surface must be as uniform as practical. Fields shall be smoothed or graded in accordance with NRCS conservation

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

practice standard Land Smoothing, Code 466, Irrigation Land Leveling, Code 464, or Precision Land Forming, Code 462, as required, to achieve this uniformity.

#### **Additional Criteria to Improve Water Quality**

The system shall prevent automatic discharge of storm water during minor rainfall events. The controlled discharge of excess water shall account for water not otherwise removed by evapotranspiration and seepage. The uniformity of storm water draw down shall be improved throughout the areas influenced by the designed system. The distance the water must travel in surface ditches before it reaches the main discharge point shall be maximized when practical.

#### **Additional Criteria to Improve Soil Environment for Vegetative Growth**

The combined capacity of the surface and subsurface facilities shall satisfy the appropriate drainage coefficient for the crops to be grown. The water table shall be held between predetermined elevations at all points in the design area when the system is being used for sub-irrigation. See NRCS conservation practice standard Irrigation System, Subirrigation, Code 754.

#### **Additional Criteria to Reduce the Rate of Oxidation of Organic Soils**

Drainage beyond that necessary to provide an adequate root zone for a crop shall be kept to a minimum. When practicable, the water table shall be raised to the surface, or to a designated maximum elevation, for a sufficient time to return the saturated zone to anaerobic conditions. The implementation of this practice must result in a reduced average annual thickness of the aerated layer of the soil.

#### **Additional Criteria to Prevent Wind Erosion**

The system shall provide sufficient moisture to the soil surface, either by ponding or capillary action, to prevent wind erosion when there is insufficient organic residue or plant material on the surface.

#### **Additional Criteria to Enable Seasonal Soil Saturation or Shallow Flooding**

The system shall provide saturation to the surface or shallow flooding for a sufficient time to

accomplish the desired pest control, provide wildlife habitat, or reduce the rate of oxidation of organic soils.

#### **CONSIDERATIONS**

An adequate water supply should be available when it is necessary to raise the water.

The effect of drainage systems on wetlands should be evaluated.

To further reduce subsidence of organic soils, the water management infrastructure should be designed for temporary flooding of fallow fields in conformance with NRCS conservation practice standard Surface Flooding of Organic Soils, Code 756.

#### **PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Plans and specifications for regulating water in drainage systems shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for properly installing and operating the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

#### **OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

An operation and maintenance plan shall be developed that will identify the intended purposes of this practice and that will identify critical dates and target elevations of the water level necessary to accomplish the intended purposes.

The plan shall also include the operation and maintenance of critical components of the infrastructure used to manage the drainage water.

#### **REFERENCES**

WMD Rules Chapter 40-4, 40-40, 40-41, 40-42, 40-44 F.A.C.

NRCS Conservation Practice Standards:

Irrigation Land Leveling, Code 464  
Irrigation System, Subirrigation, Code 754  
Land Smoothing, Code 466  
Precision Land Forming, Code 462  
Surface Flooding of Organic Soils, Code 756