NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

ANIMAL TRAILS AND WALKWAYS

(feet)
CODE 575

DEFINITION

A travel facility for livestock and/or wildlife to provide movement through difficult or ecologically sensitive terrain.

PURPOSES

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

* Provide or improve access to forage, water and shelter.

* Improve grazing efficiency and distribution.

* Divert travel away from ecologically sensitive and/or erosive sites.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On grazing lands where animal movement is impeded or restricted such as, steep rough terrain, across rock outcrops, through dense timber or brush, over lava beds, on marsh rangelands, and grazing land susceptible to overflow by water.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable For All The Purposes Stated Above.

Trails or walkways shall be constructed wide enough to accommodate movement of livestock and access by operator.

Trails or walkways shall be constructed in such a manner that accelerated erosion will not occur. Where necessary diversions with a safe out-let will be provided.

Trails or walkways seeded or planted to vegetative cover will be protected from grazing until planting material is fully established and capable of withstanding grazing and/or trampling.

Criteria Applicable For Walkways.

Walkways will be constructed to meet minimum height requirements above normal high water.

During the construction process of walkways, borrow pits will be staggered so that access to grazing areas and back to walkway will be available from either side.

When necessary structures will be installed to prevent interference with natural water movement or to control saltwater intrusion.

CONSIDERATIONS

Other practices that facilitate grazing distribution and proper intensity such as prescribed grazing should be implemented along with this practice.

1. Additional forage to be made available shall justify the expense of developing the trail or walkway;

2. The practices that facilitate grazing distribution shall be installed;

3. Potential erosion problems created by construction of a stock trail or walkway must be resolved.

Consider salting, water development, or other methods of obtaining grazing distribution.

Avoid switchbacks and excessively steep pitches in gradient.

Cattle will readily go down a 20 percent slope but will not go up that slope except for very short distances.

Water Quantity

A purpose of this practice is to improve grazing distribution by providing walkway access through marsh or wet areas. Properly designed walkways have no appreciable affect on water quantity.

There may be a slight increase in water quantity if stock trails or walkways become compacted with resulting lower infiltration rates. Unplanned diversion of surface flows may have localized undesirable effects.

1. Effects on the water budget, especially on localized rates and volumes of runoff.

2. Where applicable, consider the effects of snowcatch and melt on the water budget.

Water Quality

When this practice is properly installed, water quality impacts are negligible. Although improving grazing distribution on any area usually improves water quality, increased bedding on the walkways will increase manure concentrations.

If this practice is used to make available otherwise inaccessible water supplies, these water supplies may be degraded by the increase in livestock use. Fencing to control livestock access to water may be needed to prevent degradation.

Endangered Species Considerations

Determine if installation of this practice with any others proposed will have any effect on any federal or state listed Rare, Threatened or Endangered species or their habitat. NRCS's objective is to benefit these species and others of concern or at least not have any adverse effect on a listed species. If the Environmental Evaluation indicates the action may adversely affect a listed species or result in adverse modification of habitat of listed species which has been determined to be critical habitat, NRCS will advise the land user of the requirements of the Endangered Species Act and recommend alternative conservation treatments that avoid the adverse effects. Further assistance will be provided only if the landowner selects one of the alternative conservation treatments for installation; or at the request of the landowners, NRCS may initiate consultation with the Fish and Wildlife Service, National Marine Fisheries Service and/or California Department of Fish and Game. If the Environmental Evaluation indicates the action will not affect a listed species or result in adverse modification of critical habitat, consultation generally will not apply and usually would not be initiated. Document any special considerations for endangered species in the Practice Requirements Worksheet.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Each trail or walkway shall have a site specific design based on the criteria in this standard and as supplemented by additional criteria developed by each individual State using this practice.

Specifications Guide

For stock trails: (1) Specify length and average width dimensions; (2) grade of trail and angle of turns; (3) erosion-control measures; and (4) protection from livestock if vegetation is to be established.

For walkways: (1) Specify length, average width, and dimensions of embankment, including height above normal water; (2) location of borrow pits and whether they should be staggered; (3) provisions to prevent interference with natural water movement to (4) protection from livestock until vegetation cover is established

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Operation will consist of periodic grading or shaping on trails and walkways to maintain designed goals. Maintenance will consist of repair that may be needed following major storm events such as high runoff events, high tides or other occurrences that cause damage and interfere in the normal operation of this practice.