NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RECREATION TRAIL AND WALKWAY
(Feet)
CODE 568

DEFINITION

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

PURPOSES

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, cross country skiing, and hiking;
- 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 access to or through recreation resources.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

All planned work shall comply with Federal, State, Local and Tribal laws and regulations.

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

The trail or walkway shall be conducive to the overall recreation area 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 channel and streambank damage, hydrology modification, other water resource damage, aesthetics or unacceptable damage to wildlife habitat, fragmentation, or restrict wildlife movement.

Grade - Grades shall be determined by the intended use, location and topography. Pedestrian and equestrian trail and walkway grades should not exceed 10 percent. Grades for cross-country skiing may be as steep as 50 percent. Grades for difficult trails and hiking trails may be as steep as 20 percent.

Width - The minimum trail or walkway width shall be 4 feet (1.2 m). The width for pedestrian trails may be reduced to a minimum 3 feet (0.9 m) in areas where greater width would increase the cost materially or adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas.

Side slopes - Cut and fill slopes shall be stable for the soil material.

Drainage - Drainage measures shall be of sufficient size, intervals and gradient to ensure adequate drainage.

Erosion control - Plans shall include provisions for control of erosion. Distributed areas shall be established to vegetation as soon as practicable after construction. If soil or climatic conditions precludes 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 the appropriate conservation practice standard in the local technical guide. Use vegetation adapted to the site that will accomplish the desired purpose. Preference shall be given to native plant species. If native plant materials are not adaptable or proven effective for the planned use, then non-native species may be used.

Bridges and Elevated Walkways - Bridges and elevated walkways shall be designed for the expected loading.

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

Safety - Safety of the users shall be incorporated into the design. Adequate directional and warning signs, handrails, bridges, and culvert shall be placed as dictated by the site and intended use. Protection from slides and falling rocks shall be provided, where needed.

CONSIDERATIONS

Assure safe ingress and egress to the trail or walkway.

Consider requirements of Americans with Disabilities Act, where appropriate.

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

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.

Consider adjoining land uses and the proximity to residences, utilities, cultural resources, threatened and endangered species of plants and animals, wetlands, important farmlands, or other environmentally sensitive areas, and areas of special scenic value.

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

If the purpose of the trail or walkway is improvement of water quality, the trail or walkway should be (re) located as far away from the waterbody or watercourse as possible. Any work in and/or discharges near streams, wetlands or waterbodies may require a permit from the US Army Corps of Engineers, state water quality (permitting) authority, or local authority.

Cultural Resources Considerations

NRCS's objective is to avoid any effect to cultural resources and protect them in their original location. Determine if installation of this practice will have any effect on any cultural resources.

Document any specific considerations for cultural resources in the design docket and the Practice Requirements worksheet.

GM 420, Part 401, the California Environmental Handbook and the California Environmental Assessment Worksheet provide guidance on how the NRCS must account for cultural resources. The Field Office Technical Guide, Section II contains general information, with Web sites for additional information.

Endangered Species Considerations

Determine if installation of this practice, along with any others proposed, will have an 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 that 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 U.S. 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.

Water Quantity

1. Impacts of impervious walkways and trails on increased surface runoff;

2. Changes in deep percolation with increased surface runoff. Consider evaporation losses before infiltration, evapotranspiration changes with decreased infiltration, and average changes in root zone storage.

Water Quality

1. Change in ground water quality caused by decreased dissolved chemical infiltration;

2. Potential changes in erosion and sediment yield caused by increase runoff and temporary increases in erosion during construction;

3. Effects of dissolved chemicals in runoff resulting from recreation activities.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for recreation trails and walkways shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose. Plans and specifications shall include construction plans, drawings, job sheets or other similar documents. These documents shall specify the requirements for installing the practice, including the kind, amount and quality of materials to be used.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An Operation and Maintenance (O&M) plan shall be prepared for and reviewed with the landowner or operator. The plan shall specify that the treated areas and associated practices are inspected annually and after significant storm events to identify repair and maintenance needs.