

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONNECTICUT - RHODE ISLAND

GRADE STABILIZATION STRUCTURE (No.)

Definition

A structure to control the grade and head cutting in natural or artificial channels.

Scope

This standard applies to all types of grade stabilization structures. They may be a combination of earth embankments and mechanical spillways and may be full-flow or detention-type structures. This standard also applies to channel side-inlet structures installed to lower the water from a field elevation, a surface drain, or a waterway to a deeper outlet channel. It does not apply to structures designed to control the rate of flow or to regulate the water level in channels (587).

Purpose

To stabilize the grade and control erosion in natural or artificial channels, to prevent the formation or advance of gullies, and to enhance environmental quality and reduce pollution hazards.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

In areas where the concentration and flow velocity of water require structures to stabilize the grade in channels or to control gully erosion. Special attention shall be given to maintaining or improving habitat for fish and wildlife where applicable.

Design Criteria

The structure must be designed for stability after installation. The crest of the inlet must be set at an elevation that stabilizes upstream head cutting.

Embankment dams. Class (a) dams having a product of storage times the effective height of the dam of 3,000 or more, those more than 35 feet in effective height, and all class (b) and class (c) dams shall meet or exceed the requirements specified in Technical Release No. 60 (TR-60).

Class (a) dams having a product of storage times the effective height of the dam of less than 3,000 and an effective height of

35 feet or less shall meet or exceed the requirements specified for ponds (378).

The effective height of the dam is the difference in elevation, in feet, between the emergency spillway crest and the lowest point in the cross section along the centerline of the dam. If there is no emergency spillway, the top of the dam is the upper limit.

Pond size dams. If mechanical spillways are required, the minimum capacity of the principal spillway shall be that required to pass the peak flow expected from a 24-hour duration design storm of the frequency shown in table 1, less any reduction because of detention storage.

If the effective height of the dam is less than 20 feet and the emergency spillway has a stable grade throughout its length with no overfalls and has good vegetation to its reentry into the downstream channel, the principal spillway capacity may be reduced but can be no less than 80 percent of the 2-year frequency 24-hour duration storm.

Grade stabilization structures with settled fill height of less than 15 feet and 10-year frequency, 24-hour storm runoff less than 10 acre-feet, shall be designed to control the 10-year frequency storm without overtopping. The mechanical spillway, regardless of size, may be considered in design and an emergency spillway is not required if the combination of storage and mechanical spillway discharge will handle the design storm. The embankment can be designed to meet the requirements for water and sediment control basins (638) rather than the requirements for ponds (378).

Full-flow open structures. Drop, chute, and box inlet drop spillways shall be designed according to the principles set forth in the Engineering Field Manual for Conservation Practices, the national Engineering Handbook, and other applicable SCS publications and reports. The minimum capacity shall be that required to pass the peak flow expected from a design storm of the frequency and duration shown in table 2, less any reduction because of detention storage. Structures must not create unstable conditions upstream or downstream. Provisions must be made to insure reentry of bypassed storm flows.

Toe wall drop structures can be used if the vertical drop is 4 feet or less, flows are intermittent, downstream grades are stable, and tail water depth at design flow equal to or greater than 1/3 the height of over fall.

The ratio of the capacity of drop boxes to road culverts shall be as required by the responsible road authority or as specified in table 2 or 3, as applicable, less any reduction because of detention storage, whichever is greater. The drop box capacity

(attached to a new or existing culvert) must equal or exceed the culvert capacity at design flow.

Island-type structures. If the mechanical spillway is designed as an island-type structure, its minimum capacity shall equal the capacity of the downstream channel. For channels with very small drainage areas, the mechanical spillway should carry at least the 2-year, 24-hour storm or the design drainage curve runoff. The minimum emergency spillway capacity shall be that required to pass the peak flow expected from a design storm of the frequency and duration shown in table 2 for total capacity without overtopping the mechanical spillway headwall extensions. Provisions must be made for safe reentry of bypassed flow as necessary.

Side-inlet drainage structures. The design criteria for minimum capacity of open-weir or pipe structures used to lower surface water from field elevations or lateral channels into deeper open channels are shown in table 3. The minimum principal spillway capacity shall equal the design drainage curve runoff for all conditions.

Landscape resources. In highly visible public area and those associated with recreation, careful consideration should be given to landscape resources. Landforms, structural materials, water elements, and plant materials should visually and functionally complement their surroundings. Excavated material and cut slopes should be shaped to blend with the natural topography. Shorelines can be shaped and islands created to add visual interest and valuable wildlife habitat. Exposed concrete surfaces may be formed to add texture or finished to reduce reflectiveness and to alter color contrast. Site selection can be used to reduce adverse impacts or create desirable focal points.

General criteria. Earth embankment and emergency spillways of structures for which criteria are not provided under the standard for Ponds (378) or in TR-60 must be stable for all anticipated conditions. If earth spillways are used, they must be designed to handle the total capacity flow indicated in tables 2 or 3 without overtopping the dam. The foundation preparation, compaction, top width, and side slopes must ensure a stable dam for anticipated flow conditions. Discharge from the structure shall be sufficient that no crop damage results from flow detention.

Necessary sediment storage capacity must equal the expected life of the structure, unless a provision is made for periodic cleanout.

The earth embankment pond structures are potentially hazardous and safety precautions must be taken to prevent serious injury or loss of life. Protective guardrails, warning signs, fences, or lifesaving equipment shall be added as needed.

If the area is used for livestock, the structure, earthfill, vegetated spillways, and other areas should be fenced as necessary to protect the structure. Near urban areas, fencing may be

necessary to control access and exclude traffic that may damage the structure or to prevent serious injury or death to trespassers

Protection. The exposed surfaces of the embankment, earth spillway, borrow area, and other areas disturbed during construction shall be seeded or sodded as necessary to prevent erosion. If climatic conditions preclude the use of vegetation, nonvegetative coverings such as gravel or other mulches may be used.

### Plans and Specifications

Specified materials shall provide the stability, durability, and safety characteristics required to achieve the planned objectives

Specifications for grade stabilization structures within the scope of the standard for Ponds (378) shall, as a minimum, be commensurate with those for Ponds, Grade Stabilization Structures within the scope of TR-60 shall be constructed according to guide specifications in the National Engineering Handbook, Section 20.

Table 1. - Criteria for determining capacity of the principal spillway for dams.

Maximum drainage area (acres)	Storage (ac. ft.)	Effective height of dam ft.	Minimum design storm 24-hour duration storm yr.
100	50 or less	35 or less	2
200	50 or less	20 or less	2
200	50 or less	20-35	5
400	50 or less	20 or less	5
All others	---	---	10

Table 2. - Criteria for determining minimum capacity of full-flow open structures.

Maximum drainage area acres	Vertical drop ft.	Frequency of minimum design, 24-hour duration storm	
		Principal spillway capacity yr.	Total capacity yr.
450	5 or less	5	10
900	10 or less	10	25
All Others	---	25	100

Table 3. - Criteria for determining minimum capacity of side-inlet, open-weir, or pipe-drop-drainage structure.

Maximum drainage area	Vertical drop	Frequency of minimum design, 24-hour duration storm	
		Receiving channel depth	Total capacity
acres	ft.	ft.	yr.
450	0-5	0-10	10
450	5-10	10-20	25
900	0-10	0-20	50
All Others			100

**Planning considerations for water quantity and quality**

*Quantity*

1. Effects on volumes and rates of runoff, evaporation, deep percolation and ground water recharge.
2. Effects of the structure on soil water and resulting changes in plant growth and transpiration.

*Quality*

1. Ability of structure to trap sediment and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff.
2. Effect of structure on the susceptibility of downstream stream banks and stream beds to erosion.
3. Effects of the proposed structure on the movement of dissolved substances to ground water.
4. Effects on the visual quality of downstream water resources.