NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

RECREATION TRAIL AND WALKWAY

(ft)
CODE 568

DEFINITION

A pathway prepared especially for pedestrian, equestrian, and cycle travel.

SCOPE

This standard applies to walkways and trails constructed in recreation and scenic areas.

PURPOSE

To provide users of recreation areas with travel routed for activities such as walking, sightseeing, horseback riding, and bicycling; to prevent erosion; and to preserve and protect soil, plant, animal, and visual resources.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies to lands where prepared paths, trails, and walkways are needed for effective and safe use of the recreation resources.

DESIGN CRITERIA

Visual resources. Special attention shall be given to saving and maintaining key trees and other vegetation that have scenic value, provide shade, reduce erosion and runoff, provide den and food for wildlife, or add to the visual quality of the area.

Grade. Sustained grades shall be dictated by good judgment for the purpose intended, considering the topography, and shall not exceed 10 percent.

Width. Generally, the minimum treat width shall be 4 ft. The width in cuts for pedestrian trails on sidehill sections may be reduced to 3 ft if greater width would increase the cost materially or adversely affect the visual resources.

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

Drainage. Adequate drainage shall be provided. A raised or elevated trail or walkway may be required for wet sites that cannot be drained.

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, nonvegetative means, such as mulches or gravel, may be used. Seedbed preparation, seeding, fertilizing, and mulching shall comply with recommendations in technical guides.

Bridges. Bridges shall be designed for the maximum expected loading with and adequate factor of safety.

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

Surfacing. If surfacing is required for a firm trail, the surfacing material may be pit or creek-run gravel, concrete, asphalt, or other material that can withstand the traffic and the elements at the site.

Safety. Due consideration shall be given to safety. Protection from slides and falling rocks shall be provided, if needed. Adequate directional and warning signs, handrails, bridges, and culvert shall be placed as dictated by the site and intended use.

Maintenance. Provisions shall be made for maintaining all wearing surfaces, signs, and drainage structures.

General. Equestrian and pedestrian trails may vary from specific grades, widths, and clearing requirements if so dictated by location and topography.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

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 constructing 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.

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

SPECIFICATION GUIDE

Recreation Trail and Walkway

General

Walkways and trails shall be constructed to a planned grade and cross section. All drainage structures, surfacing, safety features (including signs, guardrails, safety fences at key locations), and removal of existing fences, shall be according to the plans.

The completed job shall present a workmanlike finish.

Clearing and Grubbing

All trees, shrubs, and fallen timber shall be removed for a distance of 4 feet each side of the trail centerline except that a distance of 2 feet each side of the trail centerline will suffice for footpaths. Stumps shall be cut close to the ground. All protruding limbs shall be removed for a distance of 4 feet each side the trail centerline and to a height of 10 feet if other than foot traffic is expected.

Disposal of Material

All undesirable material such as soil high in organic matter, stumps, and large stones shall be removed from the travel surface of the trail. Material shall be disposed of in a manner not to interfere with the trail and that is aesthetically pleasing.

Excavation and Grading

All grading shall be to the lines and grades shown on the plan. All culverts, bridges, turnouts, handrails, and grade dips shall be installed as shown on the plans. Fills will be constructed of material at near optimum moisture content. Compaction effort will be sufficient to provide firm and durable trail surface adequate for the planned traffic.

Control of Pollution

Efforts shall be made to control pollution of air and water within tolerable limits throughtout installation. All open burning shall conform to state regulations. Water pollution should be controlled by preventing erosion, trapping sediment, and proper disposal of other pollutants.

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