

CONTOUR FARMING

PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service - practice code 330



CONTOUR FARMING

Contour farming is performed on sloping cropland by following the natural contours when tilling the soil, planting, and cultivating. It also includes following established grades of terraces or diversions.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

Contour farming is a very cost effective practice when properly planned and applied.

The purpose of this practice is to reduce erosion, control runoff water, and increase moisture infiltration. Contour farming generally applies to sloping cropland but may be applicable on recreation and wildlife areas where cultural practices such as tillage and planting are used for production of special purpose crops.

Properly designed contour farming will utilize tillage marks and furrows to slow runoff and

allow more moisture to infiltrate. Contour farming can increase erosion if rainfall amount exceeds the ability of the contours to remove the runoff. Therefore, this practice is usually planned in conjunction with other practices needed for support in the event runoff exceeds the carrying capacity of the contours.

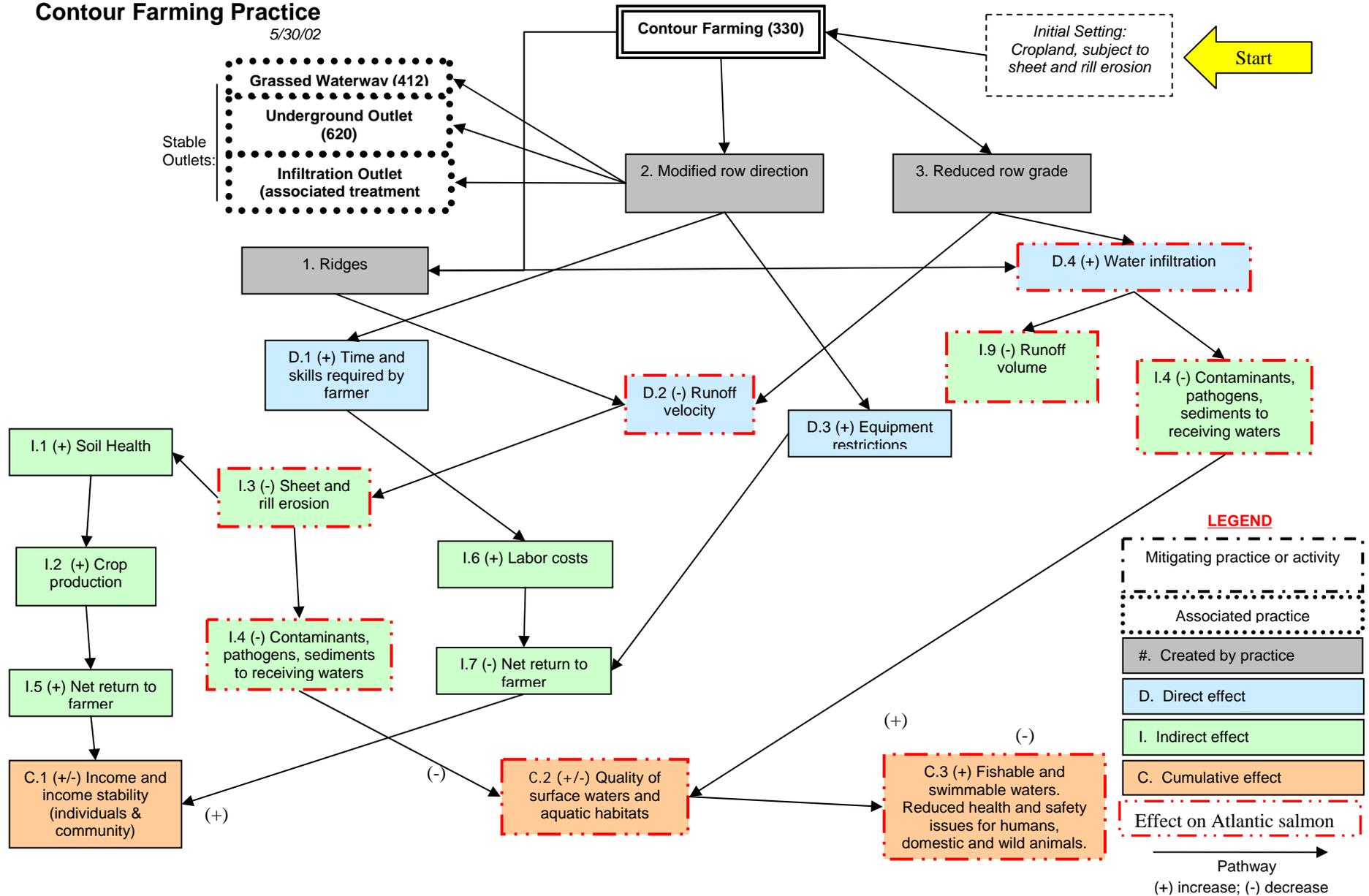
To be effective, the contours need to meet certain design criteria. Local standards and specifications generally cover the following items:

1. Alignment requirements when planned and applied with practices such as terraces, diversions, and contour strips.
2. Alignment requirements when contour farming is applied without protection from supporting practices (see above).
3. Established tolerances for deviation from true contour, row grade and row length.

The following page identifies the conservation effects expected to occur when this practice is applied. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.

Contour Farming Practice

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The diagram above identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied according to NRCS practice standards and specifications. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. All income changes are partially dependent upon market fluctuations which are independent of the conservation practices. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.