

Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Conservation Practice Standard

CHANNEL VEGETATION  
(Ac.)  
CODE 322

**DEFINITION**

Establishing and maintaining adequate vegetation on channel banks, berms, spoil, and associated areas.

**PURPOSES**

- To stabilize channel banks and adjacent areas.
- To reduce erosion and transport of sediment.
- To maintain and/or enhance the environment, including visual aspects, and fish and wildlife.

**CONDITION WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies on channel banks, berms, spoil, ditches, and associated areas. It is most suitable on floodwater diversions, floodways, open channels, stream channel stabilization, streambank protection, and surface drainage (main or lateral).

This practice is not suitable on diversions, grassed waterways or outlets, or surface drainage and field ditches. It is not suitable in areas with protective linings, those covered with water for an extended period, or in areas where conditions will not support adequate vegetation.

**CRITERIA**

**General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes**

Plant perennial vegetation suitable to soil type. Use a mixture of cool and warm season annual and warm season perennial at first planting when warm season perennial is planted September through November.

**Additional Criteria to Stabilize Channel Banks and Adjacent Area**

**Side slopes.** Specify side slopes that permit establishing and maintaining desired vegetation. In urban and recreation areas, flatter side slopes (>2.5:1) may be required to provide for public safety and enhancement of visual resources.

**Species selection.** Specify species that are suited to the soil, climate, and exposure. They must provide a lasting cover to protect the channel area and to maintain the channel design capacity. Use special purpose plantings outside the channel for wildlife, recreation, or visual resources.

**Seedbed preparation.** Specify seedbed preparation, fill rills and gullies, and move stones and debris.

**Fertilizer and soil amendments.** Specify fertilizer and soil amendments, including analyses, rate, method of application, and requirements for top-dressing.

**Planting.** Specify dates, rates, and methods of seeding, sprigging, sodding or other planting.

**Mulching.** Specify type and rate of mulch materials and the method of anchoring.

**Irrigation.** Specify irrigation if it is needed for establishing vegetation.

**Controlled access.** Control access to channels, as needed, by fencing to protect slopes and vegetation from damage.

**Additional Criteria to Control Erosion and Transport of Sediment**

**Vegetative cover.** The banks, side slopes and ditch bottom shall be established to a dense permanent vegetative cover to achieve the greatest erosion reduction possible. Vegetative

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cover shall extend at least five feet from the enter bank edge to the outer bank to provide additional support against soil detachment.

**Additional Criteria to Maintain and/or Enhance The Environment Including Fish and Wildlife**

**Vegetation.** Use permanent grasses, legumes, or grass-legume mixtures that are suitable to the site. Native warm season grass specie mixtures are recommended for wildlife purposes.

**CONSIDERATIONS**

Protect channel vegetation from sediment deposits resulting from water erosion. This may be accomplished by installation of erosion control practices such as terraces, diversions, sediment control basins or vegetative barriers in the above drainage area where the soil loss exceeds tolerable level.

To enhance wildlife habitat, mow grasses and legumes at least once every year. The residue cover provides early and late season nesting and escape cover for many species of wildlife displaced from other mowed areas. Avoid mowing during the primary nesting season of April through June.

Use plant species that produce food such as seeds, nuts, fruits, and roots. Also, plant species based on wildlife preference. Masses of trees, shrubs and ground cover of different sizes offer good protection year round.

Provide provision for safety and protection of human life and property in all aspects of design, application, and maintenance.

Methods by which endangered and threatened plants and nationally recognized natural vegetated areas will be identified and protected.

Requirements for overseeding or planting woody or herbaceous vegetation on the unexcavated side when construction is done from one side.

The planner should identify desirable trees and other vegetation and means for their preservation. Suitable species for specified soil types can be found in the County's Soil Survey.

Implement special techniques for establishing and maintaining vegetation near inlets, or outlets where concentrated flow occurs.

**PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS**

Specifications for installation, operation, and maintenance of Channel Vegetation shall be prepared for such areas according to the Criteria, Considerations, and Operations and Maintenance described in this standard, and shall be recorded on specification sheets, job sheets, or narrative statements in conservation plans.

**OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE**

These sites shall be periodically inspected and evaluated for adequately established channel vegetation to determine maintenance needs.

Provide for the management of vegetative growth, as applicable, by mowing, controlled grazing, approved chemicals, or other means to maintain the desired cover.

Provide for the reseeding or replanting, along with the use of fertilizers and/or soil amendments and irrigation, as needed.

Provide for the repair of appurtenance and fences.

**REFERENCES**

The 1991 Year Book of Agriculture, Agriculture and the Environment

The Natural Resources Conservation Service County Soil Survey

Natural Resources Conservation Service National Biology Reference Manual