



Grassed Waterway Fact Sheet

Applicable to conservation practice Grassed Waterway - 412

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service - North Dakota

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What is a grassed waterway?

A grassed waterway consists of a natural or constructed vegetated channel that is shaped or graded and vegetated to carry surface water at a non-erosive velocity to a stable outlet.

Where are they installed?

Grassed waterways are installed in areas with existing gullies, or areas needing greater conveyance capacity and stable vegetation to prevent intermittent, concentrated flow from causing gully erosion. They are most often installed on cropland, but may be applied on hayland, pasture, or other land uses.

What are the benefits of grassed waterways?

Grassed waterways provide erosion control and can ease movement of machinery across slopes. They typically produce large yields of forage that can be cut for hay or grazed. Grassed waterways provide wildlife habitat and may provide corridors for wildlife travel. Grassed waterways prevent or reduce siltation in downstream water courses and/or water bodies.

All programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis.

To apply this practice:

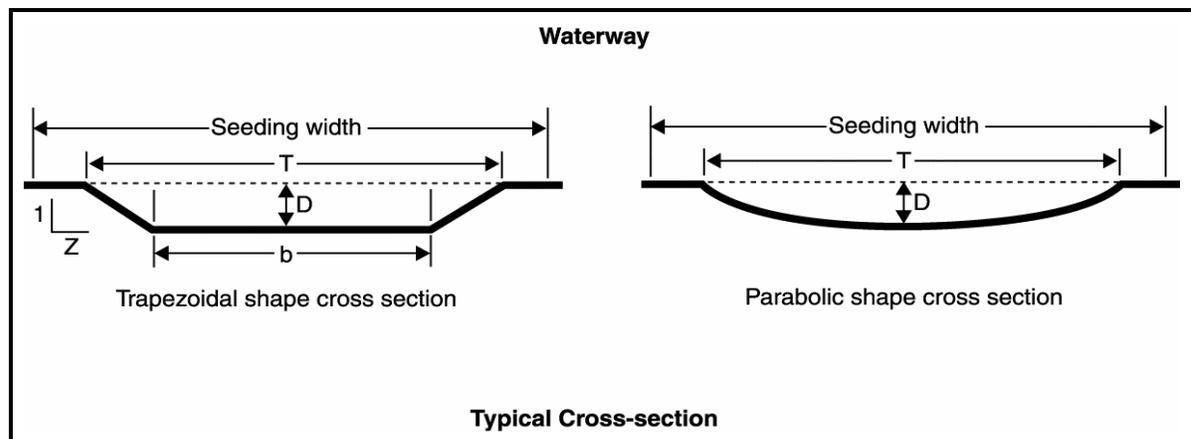
- Construct a channel that can carry water from storm of ten-year frequency, 24-hour duration.
- Plant adapted vegetation - primarily sod-forming grasses - with a companion crop. Select species that are resistant to water erosion and produce desirable forage and/or wildlife habitat.
- Anchor mulch on the area, if needed to prevent erosion until permanent vegetation becomes established.
- Guidance for planning and applying this practice are available in the North Dakota Field Office Technical Guide, Section IV – Conservation Practices – subfolder 412 – Grassed Waterway.

Maintaining grassed waterways:

- Align tillage and row direction perpendicular to the grassed waterway to the extent possible, to allow surface drainage into the waterway and to prevent flow and gully formation beside the waterway.
- Do not use the waterway as a road or cross it with machinery when the soil is moist and vulnerable to ruts.
- Prevent herbicide damage to the waterway vegetation.
- Manage vegetation by haying, grazing, or burning according to NRCS standards.

Where to get help:

For more information about grassed waterways or a site-specific design and maintenance plan, contact your local NRCS office.



A grassed waterway can have a cross-section configuration that is trapezoidal or parabolic. Side slopes may be constructed to accommodate maintenance and tillage/harvesting equipment that will cross the waterway.