

CONTOUR BUFFER STRIPS

PRACTICE INTRODUCTION

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service—Practice Code 332



CONTOUR BUFFER STRIPS

Contour buffer strips are strips of perennial grass alternated with wider cultivated strips that are farmed on the contour.

PRACTICE INFORMATION

The benefits of farming on the contour with the added protection from the grass strips make contour buffer strips an effective and cost efficient conservation practice.

Contour buffer strips slow runoff water and trap sediment. Consequently, soil erosion is generally reduced significantly by this practice. Sediments, nutrients, pesticides, and other potential pollutants are filtered out as water flows through the grass strips. The grass strips also provide food and cover for wildlife.

The practice is not well suited for undulating terrain with steep irregular slopes where contouring is impractical.

The effectiveness of contour buffer strips is dependent on several variables such as steepness, soil type, crops grown, strip widths, management, and climatic factors.

COMMON ASSOCIATED PRACTICES

Contour Buffer Strips is commonly used in a Conservation Management System with practices such as Contour Farming (330), Conservation Crop Rotation (328), Residue Management (344), Cover Crop (340), Nutrient Management (590), and Pest Management (595).

For more information, refer to the practice standard in the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and associated specifications and design criteria.

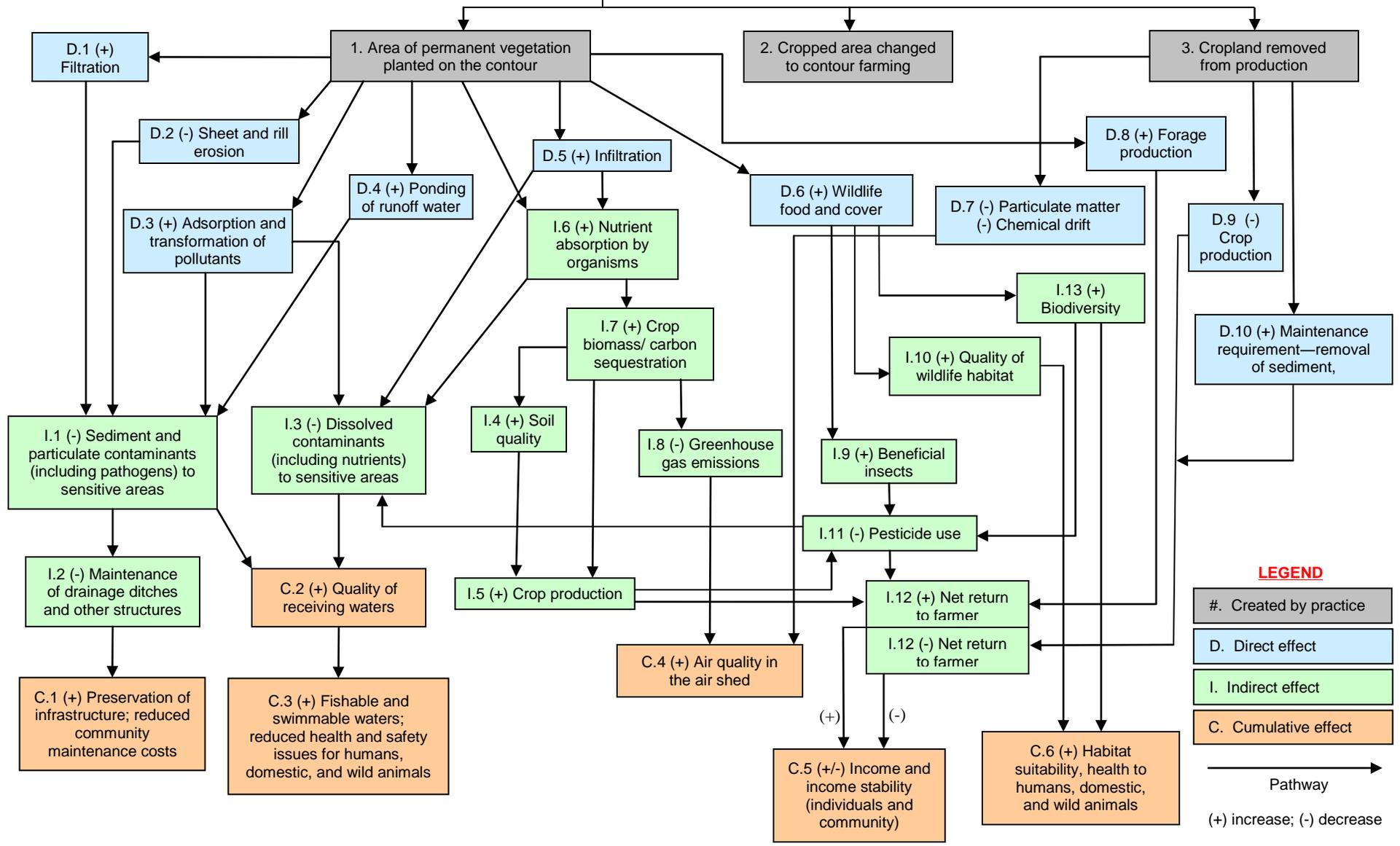
The following page identifies the effects expected to occur when this practice is applied. These effects are subjective and somewhat dependent on variables such as climate, terrain, soil, etc. All appropriate local, State, Tribal, and Federal permits and approvals are the responsibility of the landowners and are presumed to have been obtained. Users are cautioned that these effects are estimates that may or may not apply to a specific site.

Contour Buffer Strips (Herbaceous)

November 2011

Contour Buffer Strips (Herbaceous) (332)

Initial setting: Cropland, forestland grazing land containing runoff to sensitive areas



LEGEND

- #. Created by practice
- D. Direct effect
- I. Indirect effect
- C. Cumulative effect

→ Pathway
 (+) increase; (-) decrease

Note: Effects are qualified with a plus (+) or minus (-). These symbols indicate only an increase (+) or a decrease (-) in the effect upon the resource, not whether the effect is beneficial or adverse.

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.