

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

UNDERGROUND OUTLET

(Feet)

CODE 620

DEFINITION

A conduit or system of conduits installed beneath the surface of the ground to convey surface water to a suitable outlet.

PURPOSE

To carry water to a suitable outlet from terraces, water and sediment control basins, diversions, waterways, surface drains, other similar practices or flow concentrations without causing damage by erosion or flooding.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This practice applies where:

- Disposal of surface water is necessary.
- An outlet is needed for a terrace, diversion, water and sediment control basin or similar practice but a surface outlet is impractical because of stability problems, topography, climatic conditions, land use or equipment traffic.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Fire resistant materials shall be used for underground outlet components if fire is an expected hazard. All plastics must be UV resistant or protected from exposure to sunlight.

Components of underground outlets, including inlet collection boxes and conduit junction boxes, shall be designed with sufficient size to permit maintenance and cleaning operations.

Perforated components of underground outlets shall be designed to prevent soil particle movement into the underground outlet. Refer to Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice

Standard 606, Subsurface Drain, for criteria for design of filters.

Capacity. The design capacity of the underground outlet is based on requirements of the structure or practice it serves. The underground outlet can be designed to function as the only outlet for a structure or it can be designed to function with other types of outlets. The capacity of the underground outlet for natural or constructed basins shall be adequate for the intended purpose without causing inundation damage to crops, vegetation, or works of improvements. The main conduit diameter will be based on the storage volume from runoff using reduced curve numbers.

The underground outlet shall be designed to account for anticipated water surface conditions at the outlet during design flow.

Flood routing techniques may be used to determine the relationship between flooding duration, underground release rate, and basin storage volume.

Underground outlets may be designed for either pressure or gravity flow. If designed as a pressure system, all pipe and joints must be adequate to withstand the design pressure, including surges and vacuum conditions.

For gravity flow systems, utilize a flow restricting device such as an orifice or weir can be used to limit flow into the conduit or choose conduit sizes that are large enough to prevent pressure flow.

An underground outlet shall not be designed to discharge into a structure unless the structure is designed to accommodate the additional flow.

Pressure-relief wells may be used to allow excess flow to escape the conduit and flow over the surface. Only use pressure relief wells

where there is a stable outlet for the flow from the relief well. Cover pressure relief wells with a grate or other appropriate covering to prevent the entry of small animals and debris.

Inlet. An inlet can be a collection box, blind inlet (gravel), a perforated riser, or other appropriate device.

Open inlets must have a trash guard. Design the inlet to permit trash or debris entering the inlet to pass through the flow restricting device and conduit without plugging.

Perforated risers inlets shall be durable, structurally sound, and resistant to damage by rodents or other animals. Perforations must be smooth, free of burrs, and have adequate capacity to prevent the riser from restricting flow in the underground outlet. The minimum diameter of inlets shall be 4 inches. Inlets shall be of rigid material which does not require supplemental support to remain in a vertical position.

If installed to serve a terrace system, only the top inlet in the terrace system may be placed directly on the main conduit. All other inlets shall be offset a minimum of 8 feet.

Blind inlets may be used where the installation of an open or above ground structure is impractical. Design the blind inlet to prevent soil particle movement into the conduit. Refer to NEH Part 650, Engineering Field Handbook, Chapter 14 for the design of blind inlets.

Conduit. The minimum allowable conduit diameter is 4 inches. Conduit diameters shall be adequate to carry the design flow when the outlet and all inlets are operating at design capacity. Conduit joints shall be hydraulically smooth and consistent with the manufacturer's recommendation for the conduit material and installation.

Design the underground outlet to ensure that maximum allowable loads on the conduit are not exceeded for the type and size of conduit. Depth of cover requirements shall be assessed to prevent damage to the underground outlet from tillage operations and frost action.

Thrust blocking or anchoring shall be provided where needed to prevent undesired movement of the conduit. Placement and bedding requirements for the conduit are required to ensure integrity of the installation.

The flow velocity in the conduit must not exceed the maximum allowable design velocity for the conduit materials and installation condition. Gravity flow systems must maintain a positive grade throughout the conduit length towards the outlet.

Refer to Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Subsurface Drain (606) for criteria for design loading, thrust blocking, placement and bedding requirements, and minimum and maximum design velocity in the conduit.

Materials. All materials specified for the Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Subsurface Drain (606) can be used for underground outlets. Materials must meet applicable site specific design requirements for leakage, external loading, internal pressure or vacuum conditions.

Underground outlets shall be conduits of continuous tubing, tile or pipe and may be perforated or non-perforated. Perforated outlets shall be designed to prevent soil particle movement into the conduit.

Outlet. The outlet must be stable and protected against erosion and undermining for the range of design flow conditions.

The outlet must consist of a continuous section of pipe, 10 feet or longer, without open joints or perforations, and with stiffness necessary to withstand expected loads, including those caused by ice.

A shorter section of closed conduit may be used if a headwall is used at the outlet of the conduit.

All outlets must have animal guards to prevent the entry of rodents or other animals. Design animal guards to allow passage of debris while blocking the entry of animals large enough to restrict the flow in the conduit.

A vertical outlet may be used to discharge water to the ground surface where topography does not allow adequate conduit cover using a horizontal outlet, or where it is practical to discharge over a vegetated filter strip.

The vertical outlet (relief well) shall be adequately perforated and placed in an envelope of coarsely graded aggregate to allow the system to drain during periods when not in use.

Stabilization. Reshape and regrade all disturbed areas so that they blend with the surrounding land features and conditions. For areas that will not be farmed, refer to Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Critical Area Planting (342), for establishment of vegetation criteria. Permanent vegetation shall be established on all disturbed areas as soon as possible after construction.

CONSIDERATIONS

Pressure relief wells, if not properly covered, can present a safety hazard for people or animals and may be damaged by field equipment. Pressure relief wells, blind inlets, and vertical outlet locations should be identified with a high visibility marker, as applicable.

The rapid removal of water through an underground outlet will affect the water budget where it is installed. It can reduce infiltration. It can increase or decrease peak flows to receiving waters and reduce long term flows into the same waters. Consideration should be given to the effects that the underground outlet may have on water quantity downstream. Consider these long term environmental, social, and economic effects when making design decisions for the underground outlet and the structure or practice it serves. Refer to Conservation Practice Standard 554, Drainage Water Management, for criteria on flow restriction from natural basins.

Where wetlands may be affected, the cooperators will be advised and current NRCS wetland policy will apply.

Seasonal water sources can be beneficial for migratory waterfowl and other wildlife. Consider the use of a water control structure, on the inlet of an underground outlet during non-cropping periods to provide water for wildlife. Refer to Oklahoma NRCS Conservation Practice Standard, Shallow Water Development and Management (646) for information on managing seasonal water sources for wildlife.

Underground outlets can provide a direct conduit to receiving waters for contaminated runoff from crop land. Underground outlets and the accompanying structure or practice should be installed as part of a conservation system that addresses issues such as nutrient and pest

management, residue management and filter areas.

The construction of an underground outlet in a riparian corridor can have an adverse effect on the visual resources of the corridor. Consider the visual quality of the riparian area when designing the underground outlet.

Consider potential effects of soil physical and soil chemical properties influence on area where a conduit or system of conduits are installed to convey surface water. Refer to soil survey data as a preliminary planning tool for assessment of areas. Consult the Web Soil Survey to obtain soil properties and qualities information.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Prepare plans and specifications for underground outlets that describe the requirements for applying this practice according to this standard. The plans and specifications for an underground outlet may be incorporated into the plans and specifications for the structure or practice it serves. As a minimum the plans and specifications shall include:

- A plan view of the layout of the underground outlet.
- Typical cross sections or bedding requirements for the underground outlet.
- Profile of the underground outlet.
- Details of the inlet and outlet.
- Seeding requirements if needed.
- Construction specifications that describe in writing the site specific installation requirements of the underground outlet.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Prepare an operation and maintenance plan for the operator. The minimum requirements to be addressed in a written operation and maintenance plan are:

- Check all above ground connections, valves, gates, trash racks, screens, rodent guards, inlets and outlets and repair, if needed, to make sure they are functioning properly.
- Periodic inspections, especially immediately following significant runoff events, to keep inlets, trash guards, and collection boxes

and structures clean and free of materials that can reduce flow. Remove all foreign debris that hinders system operation.

- Promptly repair or replace components damaged by livestock or vandalism.
- Repair or replacement of inlets damaged by farm equipment or other vehicles.
- Repair of leaks and broken or crushed lines to insure proper functioning of the conduit.
- Periodic checking of the outlet and animal guards to ensure proper functioning.
- Eradicate or otherwise remove all rodents or burrowing animals. Promptly repair any damage caused by their activity.
- Repair of eroded areas at the pipe outlet.
- Maintain the design depth of backfill over the conduits and structures.
- Avoid operation of tillage and subsoiling equipment that could damage any component of the system.
- To maintain the permeability of surface materials on blind inlets, periodic scouring or removal and replacement of the surface soil layer may be necessary.
- Limit traffic over pipeline to designated sections that are designed for traffic loads.

REFERENCES

USDA, NRCS. National Engineering Handbook, Part 650 Engineering Field Handbook, Chapters 6, 8, 14.

Web Soil Survey:

<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>