

Landowner _____



WHAT IS A TERRACE?

A terrace is an earthen ridge and channel constructed across the slope to intercept runoff.

HOW IT HELPS THE LAND

Terraces are used to reduce sheet and rill erosion and prevent ephemeral gully erosion. Terraces also reduce sediment content in runoff water. Terraces may also be used to retain runoff for moisture conservation.

WHERE THE PRACTICE APPLIES

Terraces can be used on fields where sheet and rill erosion or ephemeral gullies are a problem. They can be used where runoff or sediment could impair water quality or cause damage downstream. They can also be used to retain water for moisture conservation.

WHERE TO GET HELP

For assistance in planning, designing and establishing a terrace system on your farm contact your local Natural Resources

Conservation Service or Conservation District office.

REQUIREMENTS FOR TERRACING

There are two types of terraces, gradient and level terraces. Gradient terraces are designed to collect runoff water and to carry it to a stable outlet such as a grassed waterway, lined waterway, grade stabilization structure or other suitable outlet. Level terraces are designed to collect runoff water and store it until it can infiltrate into the ground or can be released through a stable outlet.

Terraces are designed to control runoff from the 10 year frequency, 24 hour duration storm. For level terraces and terraces with underground outlets, the capacity is increased to store the estimated 10-year sediment unless provisions are made to maintain the design capacity through maintenance.

A terrace system consists of multiple terraces spaced to control sheet and rill erosion and to prevent ephemeral gully erosion. Terrace spacing is determined by several factors including soil type, slope, cropping system and management practices.

Terraces should be parallel if feasible or as parallel as practical. Curves should be long and gentle to accommodate farm equipment.

The terrace cross section is proportioned to fit the land slope, the crops grown and the farm machinery used.

APPLYING THE PRACTICE

The practice is considered applied when adequate outlets have been established and the terrace system has been constructed.

OUTLETS

All terraces require adequate outlets. Gradient terraces and other open-ended terraces are designed to outlet upon well protected pastures, meadows, or wooded areas, or into a grassed waterway or other suitable outlet.

Level or closed-end terraces do not require a vegetated outlet. However, an auxiliary spill area is required so that runoff events exceeding the design limits of the terrace are safely conveyed or so end closures can be readily opened if necessary. Soil infiltration may be used as an outlet for level terraces provided the soils permit drainage within a reasonable time

frame to limit crop damage and the channel capacity is maintained.

Underground outlets may be used for gradient or level terraces.

MAINTAINING THE PRACTICE

Proper maintenance of a terrace system can prolong its life indefinitely. Inspect terraces regularly, especially following major runoff events. Repair damaged areas.

Maintain the constructed ridge height and channel capacity of terrace by periodically "plowing up" each terrace.

Remove sediment that has accumulated in the terrace channel to maintain capacity or to maintain a positive channel grade. Maintain end blocks on level terraces.

Keep all terrace outlets free flowing. Where underground outlets are used, remove sediment build up so that the inlet is in the lowest place in the channel. Inlets damaged or cut off by farm equipment must be repaired or replaced immediately.

Control rodents or burrowing animals. Keep outlet ends of graded terraces open. If excessive grades or overfalls develop at the outlet, repair by shaping, vegetating, or use other stabilization measures.

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