United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Contour Buffer Strips (332)

Contour buffer strips are strips of perennial grass alternated with wider cultivated strips that are farmed on the contour. Vegetation in strips consists of adapted species of grasses or a mixture of grasses and legumes.

Practice Information

Contour buffer strips slow runoff water, trap sediment, and reduce erosion. 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 more difficult to establish on undulating to rolling topography because of the difficulty of maintaining parallel strip boundaries across the hill slope or staying within row-grade limits.

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 (332) are commonly applied with practices such as Grassed Waterway (412), Integrated Pest Management (595), Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till (329), and Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced Till (345).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.