

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 trapped and 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

Standards and specifications containing minimum requirements, including maintenance, are included in the USDA/NRCS Field Office Technical Guide.