CONTOUR BUFFER STRIPS

WISCONSIN JOB SHEET 332

DEFINITION

Contour buffer strips are narrow strips of permanent, herbaceous vegetative cover established around the hill slope and alternated with wider cropped strips that are also farmed on the contour.

PURPOSE

Contour buffer strips established on the contour and applied to achieve one or more of the following purposes:

- Reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- Reduce water quality degradation from the transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants downslope.
- Improve soil moisture management through increased water infiltration.
- Reduce water quality degradation from the transport of nutrients downslope.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Conduct all farming operations parallel to the strip boundaries except on headlands or end rows with gradients less than the criteria set forth in this standard.

Time mowing or harvest of buffer strips to maintain appropriate vegetative density and height for optimum trapping of sediment from the upslope cropped strip during the critical erosion period(s).

Fertilize buffer strips as needed to maintain stand density.

Mow or harvest sod turn strips and waterways at least once a year.

Spot seed or totally renovate buffer strip systems damaged by herbicide application after residual action of the herbicide is complete.

Redistribute sediment that accumulates along the upslope edge of the buffer strip/crop strip interface as needed. This sediment shall be spread evenly upslope over the cultivated strip when needed to maintain uniform sheet flow along the buffer/cropped strip boundary.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

If sediment accumulates just below the upslope edge of the buffer strip to a depth of 6 inches or more, or stem density falls below specified amounts in the buffer strip, relocate the buffer/cropped strip interface location.

Cultivated strips and buffer strips shall be rotated so that a mature stand of protective cover is achieved in a newly established buffer strip immediately below or above the old buffer strip before removing the old buffer to plant an erosion-prone crop. Alternate repositioning of buffer strips to maintain their relative position on the hill slope. If an established buffer is removed, a equipment width will be added to one crop strip and subtracted from another.

Renovate vegetated headlands or end row area as needed to keep ground cover above 65 percent.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Specifications for installation, operation, and maintenance of contour buffer strips shall be prepared for each field according to the Criteria, Considerations, and Operations and Maintenance described in this standard, and shall be recorded on the 332 Job Sheet, narrative statements in conservation plans, or other acceptable documentation. Plans shall include:

- A statement of practice design objective (soil loss to T or other level determined by the client);
- The percent land slope and slope length (L) used to plan the practice;
- The minimum and maximum allowable row grades for the contour buffer system;
- Benchmark condition estimate of before and after soil loss;
- The design width of vegetated buffer strips and cropped strips prior to any adjustment;
- The farm equipment type and width utilized to adjust cropped strip width (as necessary);
- The actual width of crop and vegetated buffer strips as installed;
- The seed mixture to establish the buffer strips; and
- A sketch, plan map, or photograph of the field showing:
    - » The approximate location of the keyline(s) used to establish the system,
    - » The location of stable outlets and outlets needing treatment identified during the design of the contour buffer system, and
    - » The location of all existing or planned supporting conservation practices needed to control surface water runoff.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE CHECK LIST: (check all that apply)

- ☐ Conduct all farming operations parallel to the strip boundaries except on headlands or end rows with gradients less than the criteria set forth in this standard.
- ☐ Time mowing of buffer strips to maintain appropriate vegetative density and height for optimum trapping of sediment from the upslope cropped strip during the critical erosion period(s).
- ☐ Fertilize buffer strips as needed to maintain stand density.
- ☐ Mow sod turn strips and waterways at least once a year.
- ☐ Spot seed or totally renovate buffer strip systems damaged by herbicide application after residual action of the herbicide is complete.
- ☐ Redistribute sediment that accumulates along the upslope edge of the buffer strip/ crop strip interface as needed. This sediment shall be spread evenly upslope over the cultivated strip when needed to maintain uniform sheet flow along the buffer/ cropped strip boundary.
- ☐ If sediment accumulates just below the upslope edge of the buffer strip to a depth of 6 inches or more, or stem density falls below specified amounts in the buffer strip, relocate the buffer/cropped strip interface location.
- ☐ Cultivated strips and buffer strips shall be rotated so that a mature stand of protective cover is achieved in a newly established buffer strip immediately below or above the old buffer strip before removing the old buffer to plant an erosion-prone crop. Alternate repositioning of buffer strips to maintain their relative position on the hill slope.
- ☐ Renovate vegetated headlands or end row area as needed to keep ground cover above 65 percent.

PRACTICE WORKSHEET

PRACTICE PURPOSE(S):

- ☐ Reduce sheet and rill erosion.
- ☐ Reduce water quality degradation from the transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants downslope.
- ☐ Improve soil moisture management through increased water infiltration.
- ☐ Reduce water quality degradation from the transport of nutrients downslope.

Field Number/Location: _____ **Acres Installed:** _____ **Seeding Date:** _____

Average Width (ft.): Minimum Width (ft.): _____ **Buffer Strip Length (ft.):** _____

Number of Strips (ft.): _____ **Spacing between Strips (ft.):** _____

Site Preparation: _____

Planting Method: _____

Planting Description *(e.g. pure grass seed mix exactly on contour, etc.)*:

SEEDING RATES AND SPECIES

Plant species	lbs./ac. of seed (PLS)	Total lbs. of seed for planned acreage
Totals:	0	0

COST SHARE DOCUMENTATION FOR CASE FILE

Before payment is made, the following information is required to be in the case file:

- ☐ Location map and documentation of practice layout (actual "as built" location) according to plans and specifications is present in the client case file.
  - ☐ Planned acres:_____
  - ☐ Design computations
  - ☐ Documentation of vegetation establishment (Seedbed preparation and seeding method, seeding mixture and PLS seeding rates)
- ☐ Photographs of installed practice that include the date the photo was taken on-site.
- ☐ Field verification is documented and a certified planner verified "as installed" this practice meets NRCS standards and specifications.
  - ☐ Applied acres:_____

I verify the conservation practice Contour Buffer Strips meets NRCS standards and specifications.

_____

Certified Planner (print) (sign) Date

CONTOUR BUFFER STRIPS

Client Name: **Planner Name:**

Practice Purpose:

PLANNED PRACTICE LOCATION AND EXTENT

Contract Number	Contract Identification Number (CIN)	Tract Number	Field Number(s)	Acres Contracted	Acres Planned	Actual Acres Applied (NRCS USE ONLY)

*A completed copy of this page must be submitted for a financial assistance payment to be processed.

Strip Number:	Width	Length	Row Slope Length	Before/After Soil Loss	Slope Length Steepness
CBS					
Crop					
CBS					
Crop					
CBS					
Crop					
CBS					
Crop					