

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

ACCESS ROAD

(Ft)

CODE 560

DEFINITION

A travel-way for equipment and vehicles constructed as part of a conservation plan.

PURPOSE

To provide a fixed route for vehicular travel for resource activities involving the management of timber, livestock, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and other conservation enterprises while protecting the soil, water, air, fish, wildlife, and other adjacent natural resources.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

Where access is needed from a private or public road or highway to a land use enterprise or conservation measure, or where travel ways are needed in a planned land use area.

Access roads range from seasonal use roads, designed for low speed and rough driving conditions, to all-weather roads heavily used by the public and designed with safety as a high priority. Some roads are only constructed for a single purpose; i.e. control of forest fires, logging and forest management activities, access to remote recreation areas, or access for maintenance of facilities.

CRITERIA

Access roads shall be designed to serve the enterprise or planned use with the expected vehicular or equipment traffic. The type of vehicle or equipment, speed, loads, soil, climatic, and other conditions under which vehicles and equipment are expected to operate need to be considered. Planned work shall comply with all federal, state and local laws and regulations.

Where general public use is anticipated, roads shall be designed to meet applicable federal, state and local criteria.

FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL LAWS

Design and construction activities shall comply with all federal, state, and local laws, rules, and regulations governing activities in or along streams, pollution abatement, health, and safety. The owner or operator shall be responsible for securing all required permits or approvals and for performing all planned work in accordance with such laws and regulations. NRCS employees are not to assume responsibility for procuring these permits, rights, or approvals, or for enforcing laws and regulations. NRCS may provide the landowner or operator with technical information needed to obtain the required rights or approvals to construct, operate, and maintain the practice.

NRCS, NHCP

August, 2000

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Permits may be required from the following agencies:

1. **West Virginia Department of Health**
2. **West Virginia Department of Agriculture**
3. **West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection**

GENERAL

Where there is no NRCS standard or specification to provide criteria and control for any component of an access road, the standards and specifications of the WV-DOH shall be followed.

Location. Roads shall be located to serve the purpose intended, to facilitate the control and disposal of surface and subsurface water, to control or reduce erosion, to make the best use of topographic features, and to include scenic vistas where possible. The roads should generally follow natural contours and slopes to minimize disturbance of drainage patterns. Roads shall be located where they can be maintained and where water management problems are not created. To reduce potential pollution, roads shall be located away from watercourses. Utilize buffers where possible to protect water-bodies.

Alignment. The gradient and horizontal alignment shall be adapted to the intensity of use, mode of travel, the type of equipment and load weights, and the level of development.

Grades normally should not exceed 10 percent except for short lengths. Maximum grades of 18 percent should only be exceeded if necessary for special uses such as logging roads, field access roads, fire protection roads or other roads not accessible for use by the general public.

For stream crossings, the road should be aligned so that it crosses perpendicular to the channel as much as possible.

Width. The minimum width of the roadbed is 14 ft for one-way traffic and 20 ft for two-way

traffic. The roadbed width includes a tread-width of 10 feet for one-way traffic or 16 feet for two-way traffic. Each type of road also requires 2 feet of shoulder width on each side. Single-lane logging or special-purpose roads can have a minimum width of 10 feet, with greater widths at curves and turnouts. The two-way traffic width shall be increased approximately 4 feet for trailer traffic. The shoulder width may be either gravel or grass.

Turnouts shall be used on single lane roads where vehicles travel in both directions on a limited basis. Where turnouts are used, road width shall be increased to a minimum of 20 feet for a distance of at least 30 feet.

Side Slopes. All cuts and fills shall be designed to have stable slopes of a minimum of 2 horizontal to 1 vertical on heights of less than 4 feet. For short lengths, rock areas, or very steep hillsides, steeper slopes may be permitted, if soil conditions warrant and special stabilization measures are installed.

Areas with geological conditions and soils subject to slides shall be avoided or treated to prevent slides.

Drainage. The type of drainage structure used will depend on the intended use and runoff conditions. Culverts, bridges, fords, or grade dips for water management shall be provided at all natural drainage ways. The capacity and design shall be consistent with sound engineering principles and shall be adequate for the class of vehicle, type of road, development, or use. When a culvert or bridge is installed in a drainage way, its minimum capacity shall convey the design storm runoff without causing erosion or road overtopping. Table 1 lists minimum design storm frequencies for various road types.

An erosion-resistant low point or overflow area may be constructed across the access road to supplement culvert capacity on non-public use roads **and shall be adequate to contain a 2 year frequency storm.** Culverts, bridges, fords and hardened overflow areas should be installed so the road crossing does not significantly impact fish migration.

Culverts shall be a minimum of 12 inches in diameter and installed at a depth at least 12 inches below the subgrade of the

road, unless other conditions dictate more stringent requirements.

Bridges shall have the capacity to carry the runoff from a 25 year frequency storm except for infrequently used roads where a 5 year frequency storm may be used.

Roadside ditches shall be adequate to provide surface drainage for the roadway and deep enough, as needed to serve as outlets for subsurface drainage. At a minimum, the roadside ditch shall be 1.0 foot below the top of road surface to provide internal drainage. Ditch channels shall be designed to be on stable grades or protected with structures or linings for stability.

Table 1

Road Type	Storm Frequency
Forest Access Roads, Farm Field Access Roads	2 year - 24 Hour
Farm Driveways, Recreation Facility Access Roads	10 year - 24 Hour
Public Access Roads, Camp grounds, Etc.	25 year - 24 Hour

Water-breaks or water-bars may be used to control surface runoff on low-intensity use forest, ranch or similar roads. On steep grades where runoff and erosion is anticipated down the road, water bars should be considered. Water bars must be constructed of materials that are compatible with the use and maintenance of the road surface. Water bar discharge areas must be well vegetated or have other erosion resistant materials. See Figure 1 Recommended Spacing of Relief Culverts and Water Bars Based on Soil Type.

Surface crowning can also help direct road runoff into the side drainage ditches. Unobstructed flow into the ditches must be maintained to prevent flows from causing roadside erosion. Provide a turnaround at the end of dead end roads. In some areas, turnarounds may also be desirable for stream, lake, recreation, or other access purposes.

Provide parking space as needed to keep vehicles off the road or from being parked in undesirable locations.

Surfacing. Access roads shall be given a wearing course or surface treatment if required by traffic needs, soil, climate, erosion control, or particulate matter emission control. The type of treatment, if needed, depends on local conditions, available materials, and the existing road base. If these factors or the volume of traffic is not a problem, no special treatment of the surface is required. On weak bearing capacity soils such as silts, organics, and clays, the surface treatment should be underlain with a geotextile material specifically designed for road stabilization applications when the road is used on a regular basis.

Un-surfaced roads may require controlled access to prevent damage or hazardous conditions during adverse climatic conditions.

Toxic and acid-forming materials shall not be used on roads. This should not be construed to prohibit use of chemicals for dust control and snow and ice removal after considering potential impacts on stabilizing vegetation.

Gravel Roads. The minimum thickness of the gravel base course shall be 4 inches. Where the road is being constructed over fine-grained soils, the minimum thickness shall be increased to 6 inches. The surfacing material may be crushed stone, gravel or other approved substances. Where stone, gravel or other approved substances. Where stone or gravel is used, the material shall be reasonable well graded with a maximum size of 1.5 inches and sufficient fines to provide a firm surface. The use of geotextile fabric between the natural soil and the gravel is recommended.

Paved Roads. Surfacing material shall be consolidated wearing course such as concrete or compacted bituminous road mix. Minimum thickness over the base course shall be as follows.

Concrete- 4 inches, Bituminous-2 inches Base course materials shall have a maximum diameter of 2.5 inches, be

reasonably well graded, and compact to a dense durable support layer. Minimum thickness of the base course shall be 6 inches after compaction. The minimum design wheel load for surfaced roads shall be 4,000 pounds. A geotextile fabric between the base course and the natural soil is recommended. The type and kind of geotextile fabric shall be designated for the particular site.

The subgrade established for the road shall be crowned at lease 0.5 inch per foot of width, except where there is a grade dip for drainage.

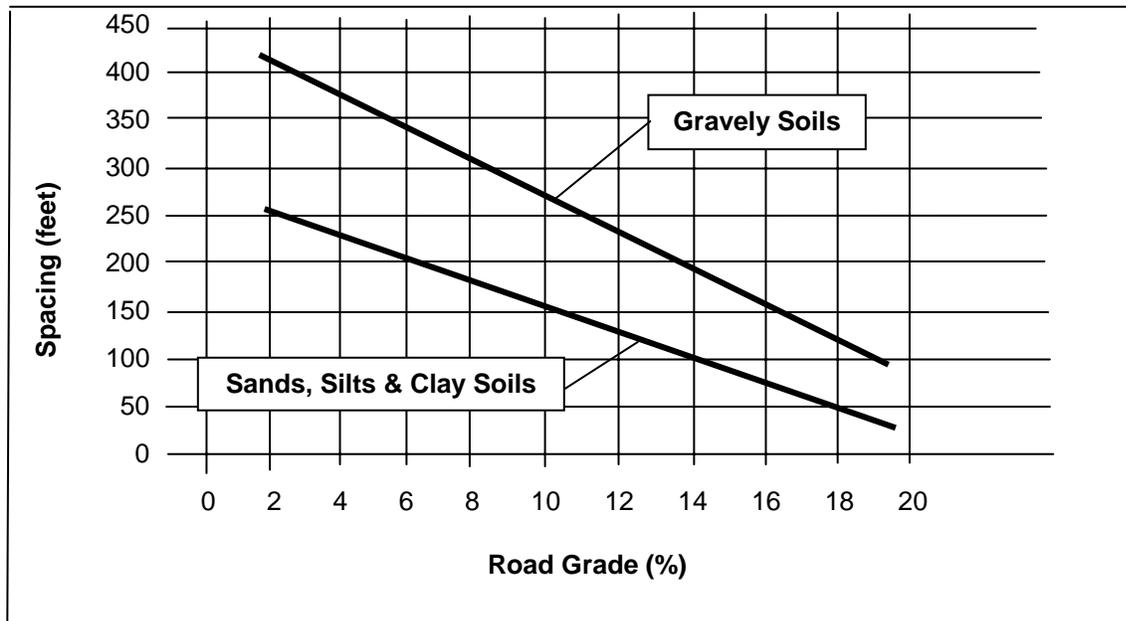
Utilize additional conservation practices to reduce the potential for generation and transport of particulate matter emissions.

manner that erosion and air and water pollution are minimized and held within legal limits. Construction shall include the following requirements as necessary for the job:

1. Trees, stumps, roots, brush, weeds, and other objectionable material shall be removed from the work area.
2. Unsuitable material shall be removed from the roadbed area.
3. Grading, sub-grade preparation, and compaction shall be done as needed.
4. Surfacing shall be done as needed.
5. Measures must be in place to limit the generation of particulate matter during construction.
6. Attempt to balance cut and fill quantities.

Construction Operations. Construction operations should be carried out in such a

**Figure 1
Recommend Spacing of Relief Culverts and Water Bars Based on Soil Types**



Traffic Safety. Passing lanes, turnouts, guardrails, signs, and other facilities as needed for safe traffic flow shall be provided. Traffic safety shall be a prime factor in selecting the angle and grade of the intersection with public highways. Preferably, the angles shall be not less than 85 degrees. The public highway shall be entered either at the top of a hill or far enough from the top or a curve to provide visibility and a safe sight distance. The clear sight distance to each side shall not be less than 300 feet or as required by local regulations.

Erosion Control. If soil and climatic conditions are favorable, roadbanks and disturbed areas shall be vegetated as soon as possible and skid trails, landings, logging, and similar roads shall be vegetated after harvesting or seasonal use is completed (see Critical Area Planting-342). If the use of vegetation is precluded and protection against erosion is needed, protection shall be provided by non-vegetative materials, such as gravel or other organic or inorganic material (see Mulching 484), or in accordance with local regulations.

Roadside channels, cross drains, and drainage structure inlets and outlets shall be designed to be stable (see Structure for Water Control). If protection is needed, riprap or other similar materials shall be used.

Watercourses and water quality shall be protected during and after construction by erosion-control facilities and maintenance. Filter strips, water and sediment control basins, and other conservation practices shall be used and maintained as needed.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider visual resources and environmental values during the planning and designing of the road system.

When available, consider using organic biodegradable materials as a surface treatment.

Access roads should be located where minimal adverse impacts will affect wetlands,

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waterbodies wildlife habitat, and air quality. Consideration should be given to the following:

- Effects on downstream flows or aquifers that would affect other water uses or users.
- Effects on the volume and timing of downstream flow to prohibit undesirable environmental, social, or economic effects.
- Short-term and construction-related effects of this practice on the quality of on-site downstream water courses.
- Overall effects on erosion and the movement of sediment, pathogens, and soluble and sediment-attached substances that would be carried by runoff from construction activities.
- Effects on wetlands and water-related wildlife habitats that would be associated with the practice.
- Establishing vegetation on road shoulders wider than the 2-4 ft.
- Limiting the number of vehicles and vehicle speed will reduce the potential for generation of particulate matter and decrease safety and air quality concerns.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for constructing access roads shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance plan will be developed ***that is consistent with the purpose, it's intended life, safety requirements, and design criteria.***

1. Inspect culverts, roadside ditches, water bars and outlets after each major runoff event and restore flow capacity as needed.

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2. Minimize the damage to vegetative buffers adjacent to the road when it is necessary to chemically treat the road surface to maintain erosion protection.
3. Maintain vegetated areas in adequate cover to meet the intended purpose(s).
4. Fill low areas in travel treads and re-grade, as needed, to maintain road cross section.
5. Inspect roads with water-bars periodically to insure proper cross section is available and outlets are stable.
6. Conservation practices that limit particulate matter emissions should be incorporated into long-term maintenance plans.
7. ***Unsurfaced and gravel roads shall be graded periodically to maintain a uniform surface, maintain original cross-section and to facilitate drainage.***
8. ***Paved roads shall be maintained by patching potholes and deteriorated surfaces with original material. Roads shall be resurfaced as needed.***
9. ***Roadside ditches and drainage structures shall be checked regularly to insure that they do not become clogged with silt or debris. Silt and debris shall be removed as needed to maintain the original capacity.***
10. ***Seeded areas adjacent to the road shall be checked periodically to insure that a vigorous stand of vegetation is maintained.***