

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE  
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**

**RECREATION TRAIL AND WALKWAY**

(Ft.)

**CODE 568**

**DEFINITION**

A pathway for pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, and other off-road modes of travel through or to recreation resources.

**PURPOSE**

This practice may be applied as part of a resource management system to support one or more of the following purposes:

- Provide or improve recreation access and scenic areas
- Provide travelways for recreational activities such as walking, sightseeing, horseback riding, bicycling, cross country skiing, and hiking
- Direct travel away from ecologically sensitive and/or erosion prone areas
- Minimize on-site and off-site damage to resources during periods of access

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

On land areas where prepared paths, trails, and walkways are needed for effective and safe access to or through recreation resources.

**CRITERIA**

Plants, landscaping timbers, traffic control measures, wooden walkways, grades, etc., shall be evaluated for effectiveness, aesthetics, and accessibility.

The trail or walkway shall be conducive to the overall recreation area and aesthetically blend with the general landscape and surroundings.

The trail or walkway shall be configured to minimize adverse on-site and off-site impacts such as accelerated erosion, riparian zone degradation, stream channel and streambank damage, hydrology modification, other water resource damage, aesthetics, or unacceptable damage to wildlife habitat, fragmentation, or restrict wildlife movement.

**Visual Resources.** Special attention shall be given to saving and maintaining key trees and other vegetation that have scenic value, provide shade, reduce erosion and runoff, provide den and food for wildlife, or add to the visual quality of the area. Route trails to take advantage of pleasing views.

**Grade.** Grades shall be determined by the intended use, location, and topography. Grades shall not exceed 10 percent, except grades up to 15 percent for distances of 200 feet or less are acceptable for pedestrian and equestrian trails. Steps should be provided on steep pedestrian trails and walkways.

Bicycle trail grades shall maintain a minimum 2-foot graded area on each side of the trail, graded no steeper than a 6:1 slope.

Erosion control or water diversions shall be required on grades that are erosive.

**Width.** The minimum trail or walkway width shall be 4 feet. The width for pedestrian trails may be reduced to a minimum 3 feet in areas where greater width would increase the cost materially or adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas. All trees, shrubs, and fallen timber shall be removed for the specified width. Stumps shall be cut as close to the ground as possible. All protruding limbs shall be removed for a distance of 2 feet on each side of the trail and to the height specified.

**Side Slopes.** Cut and fill slopes shall be stable for the soil material.

**Drainage.** Drainage measures shall be of sufficient size, intervals, and gradient to ensure adequate drainage. A raised or elevated trail or walkway may be required for wet sites that cannot be drained.

**Erosion Control.** Plans shall include provisions for control of erosion. Disturbed areas shall be established in vegetation as soon as practicable after construction. If soil or climatic conditions preclude the use of vegetation, and protection is needed, non-vegetative means, such as mulches or gravel, may be used. Seedbed preparation, seeding, fertilizing, and mulching shall be according to the Critical Area Planting (342).

Use vegetation adapted to the site that will accomplish the desired purpose. Preference shall be given to native plant species. If native plant materials are not adaptable or proven effective for the planned use, then non-native species may be used.

**Bridges and Elevated Walkways.** Bridges and elevated walkways shall be designed for the maximum expected loading with an adequate factor of safety.

**Surfacing.** If surfacing is required for a firm, stable trail the surfacing material shall be pit or creek-run gravel, concrete, asphalt, or other materials that can withstand the anticipated traffic and elements at the site.

**Safety.** Safety of the users shall be incorporated into the design. Adequate directional and warning signs, handrails, bridges, and culverts shall be placed as dictated by the site and intended use. Protection from slides and falling rocks shall be provided where needed.

Assure safe ingress and egress to the trail or walkway. Assure adequate parking for users and an operation and maintenance staging area.

All drainage, erosion control structures, bridges, or other structural features shall be in accordance with accepted practices and shall be designed in accordance with appropriate engineering standards, handbooks, and NRCS procedures.

All undesirable material such as soil high in organic matter, stumps, and large stones shall be removed from the tread area of the trail.

**NRCS, IA**

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## CONSIDERATIONS

Accessibility by all users should be considered. Develop facilities that are accessible to individuals with physical disabilities whenever feasible. Use the guidance of the Americans with Disabilities Act where appropriate.

Consider potential ecological and human impacts when planning a trail for use.

## PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for recreation trails and walkways shall be prepared for each site in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

The following list of Construction Specifications is intended as a guide to selecting the appropriate specifications for each specific project. The list includes most, but may not contain all, of the specifications that are needed for a specific project:

- IA-1 Site Preparation
- IA-5 Pollution Control
- IA-6 Seeding and Mulching for Protective Cover
- IA-21 Excavation
- IA-23 Earthfill
- IA-26 Topsoiling

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and maintenance (O&M) plan shall be developed and implemented for the life of the practice.

The plan shall specify that the treated areas and associated practices are inspected annually and after significant storm events to identify repair and maintenance needs.