Grassed Waterway

Shaping and establishing grass in a natural drainageway to prevent gullies from forming and control soil erosion.

Description

A natural drainageway is graded and shaped to form a smooth, bowl-shaped channel. This area is seeded to sod-forming grasses. Runoff water flows over the grass rather than tearing soil away and forming a gully. An outlet is often installed at the base of the drainageway to stabilize the waterway.

Benefits

- ☐ Grass cover protects the drainageway from gully erosion.
- ☐ Vegetation may act as a filter, absorbing some of the pesticides and nutrients in runoff water.
- ☐ Vegetation provides cover for wildlife.

Planning

- ☐ Is major land reshaping needed?
- ☐ Is there a proper outlet for surface runoff at the bottom of the waterway?
- ☐ Are soil conservation measures installed to prevent siltation?
- ☐ Will tile drainage be necessary to establish vegetation in the waterway?

Tech Notes

- ☐ A waterway should be designed to carry the peak runoff from a ten-year, 24-hour storm. Check NRCS design charts.
- ☐ Plant seed at recommended time and rate. Place seed about 1/4 to 1/2 inch deep. If feasible, plant across the slope to reduce erosion.
- ☐ A nurse crop, temporary cover or mulch may be necessary until permanent cover is established.

Maintenance

- ☐ Lift implements off the ground and shut off spray equipment when crossing.
- ☐ Do not use the waterway as a roadway.
- ☐ Fertilize based on soil test results.
- ☐ Mow periodically, but wait until August 15 so that young birds have a chance to leave the nest.
- ☐ Maintain the width of the grass area when tilling surrounding fields.
- ☐ Avoid planting end rows along the waterway to prevent a new gully from forming on the outside edges of the waterway.