



**Natural Resources Conservation Service**  
**CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD**  
**STRUCTURE FOR WATER CONTROL**

**CODE 587**

**(no)**

**DEFINITION**

A structure in a water management system that conveys water, controls the direction or rate of flow, maintains a desired water surface elevation, or measures water.

**PURPOSE**

This practice may be applied as a management component of a water management system to:

- control the stage, discharge, distribution, delivery or direction of water flow

**CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES**

This practice applies wherever a permanent structure is needed as an integral part of a water-control system to serve one or more of the following functions:

- Convey water from one elevation to a lower elevation within, to or from a water conveyance system such as a ditch, channel, canal or pipeline designed to operate under open channel conditions. Typical structures: drops, chutes, turnouts, surface water inlets, head gates, pump boxes and stilling basins.
- Control the elevation of water in drainage or irrigation ditches. Typical structures: checks, flashboard risers and check dams.
- Control the division or measurement of irrigation water. Typical structures: division boxes and water measurement devices.
- Keep trash, debris or weed seeds from entering pipelines. Typical structure: debris screen.
- Control the direction of channel flow resulting from tides and high water or back-flow from flooding. Typical structures: tide and water management gates.
- Control the water table level, remove surface or subsurface water from adjoining land, flood land for frost protection or manage water levels for wildlife or recreation. Typical structures: water level control structures, flashboard risers, pipe drop inlets and box inlets.
- Convey water over, under or along a ditch, canal, road, railroad or other barriers. Typical structures: bridges, culverts, flumes, inverted siphons and long span pipes.
- Modify water flow to provide habitat for fish, wildlife and other aquatic animals. Typical structures: chutes, cold water release structures and flashboard risers.
- Provide silt management in ditches or canals. Typical structure: sluice.
- Supplement a resource management system on land where organic waste or commercial fertilizer is applied.
- Create, restore or enhance wetland hydrology.

NRCS reviews and periodically updates conservation practice standards. To obtain the current version of this standard, contact your Natural Resources Conservation Service State office or visit the Field Office Technical Guide online by going to the NRCS website at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/> and type FOTG in the search field.

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NRCS, VA  
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Virginia Conservation Practice Standard *Structure for Water Control (Code 587)* does not apply to the structural components of irrigation pipelines, subsurface drains, and grade stabilization structures.

## CRITERIA

### General Criteria Applicable to All Purposes

Vegetation complying with Virginia Conservation Practice Standard *Critical Area*

*Planting (Code 342)* shall be established on all disturbed earth surfaces. Where soil, climate or site specific conditions preclude establishing permanent vegetation, other protective means such as mulches or gravels, shall be used.

The structure shall be fenced, if necessary, to protect the vegetation.

Structures shall not be installed that have an adverse effect on septic filter fields.

The water level upstream of water control structures shall not be raised on adjacent landowners without their permission.

Design the structure with a capacity appropriate for the intended practice or purpose. The capacity must not be less than the drainage removal rates for drain systems such as field ditches or mains and laterals.

## CONSIDERATIONS

When planning, designing, and installing this practice, the following items should be considered:

- Effects on the water budget, especially on volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, transpiration, deep percolation and ground water recharge.
- Potential for a change in the rate of plant growth and transpiration because of changes in the volume of soil water.
- Effects on downstream flows or aquifers that would affect other water uses or users.
- Effects on the field water table to ensure that it will provide a suitable rooting depth for the anticipated crop.
- Potential use for irrigation management to conserve water.
- Effect of construction on aquatic life.
- Effects on stream system channel morphology and stability as it relates to erosion and the movement of sediment, solutes and sediment-attached substances carried by runoff.
- Effects on the movement of dissolved substances below the root zone and to ground water.
- Effects of field water table on salt content in the root zone.
- Short term and construction-related effects of this practice on the quality of downstream water.
- Effects of water level control on the temperatures of downstream waters and their effects on aquatic and wildlife communities.
- Effects on wetlands or water-related wildlife habitats.
- Effects on the turbidity of downstream water resources.
- Existence of cultural resources in the project area and any project impacts on such resources.
- Conservation and stabilization of archeological, historic, structural and traditional cultural properties when appropriate.

Design alternatives presented to the client should address economics, ecological concerns and acceptable level of risk for design criteria as it relates to hazards to life or property.

## PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing structures for water control shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purpose.

The plan shall specify the location, grades, quantities, dimensions, materials, and hydraulic and structural requirements for the individual structure. Provisions must be made for necessary maintenance. Care must be used to protect the surrounding visual resources. If watercourse fisheries are important, special precautions or design features may be needed to facilitate continuation of fish migrations.

Record all required information in an engineer field book, on a plan sheet or design computation sheet, or in another appropriate location.

## DESIGN DATA

- Completed Environmental Evaluation and subsequent requirements.
- Soils investigation.
- Survey and plot data: profile, cross-sections, topography, as needed.
- Design computations, including purpose of practice and references used, drainage area and flow calculations, design elevations, appurtenance design, as applicable.
- Plan view of site with existing and planned features, including dimensions, distances, etc.
- Standard Cover Sheet (VA-SO-100A).
- Materials and quantities needed. Identify borrow material and/or spoil area, as needed.
- Vegetation and/or ground cover requirements.
- Identification of needed Erosion & Sediment Control measures.
- Supplemental practices required.
- Virginia Conservation Practice Specifications (700 Series).
- Operation and Maintenance Plan.

## CHECK DATA

- As-built survey.
- As-built plans including dimensions, types and quantities of materials installed, and variations from design. Include justification for variations.
- Locations of appurtenant practices.
- Adequacy of vegetation and/or ground cover.
- Complete as-built section of Cover Sheet.

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

An operation and management plan shall be provided to and reviewed with the land manager. The plan shall be site specific and include but not be limited to the following: Structures will be checked and necessary maintenance, including removal of debris, shall be performed after major storms and at least semi-annually. Water level management and timing shall be adequately described wherever applicable.

## REFERENCES

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. National Engineering Handbook, Part 650, Engineering Field Handbook, Chapter 1, Engineering Surveys, and Chapter 14, Water Management (Drainage).

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Technical Release 62- Engineering Layout, Notes, Staking and Calculations (January 1979).

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Electronic Field Office Technical Guide (eFOTG), Section IV [Online]. Available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/eFOTG>.

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Virginia 700 Series Construction Specifications. [Online]. Available at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/eFOTG>

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service. Virginia, General Manual-190, Part 410, Compliance with NEPA.

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Engineering Handbook, Part 624, Chapter 10, Water Table Control.

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