



July 2018

Iowa NRCS Information for Grassed Waterway Maintenance

Mark Garrison, NRCS Environmental Engineer
(515) 323-2226, mark.garrison@ia.usda.gov

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides technical and financial assistance to eligible producers to assist with installation of conservation practices for their operations. This article provides information in regarding the maintenance of grassed waterways.

Maintenance of grassed waterways is important to facilitate the conveyance of water from other conservation practices, prevent gully erosion, and to protect and improve water quality. Important grassed waterway maintenance items to consider include:

- Inspect regularly and after significant storm events. Fill, compact, and reseed any damaged areas immediately.
- Remove sediment deposits to maintain the capacity of the waterway.
- Avoid using the waterway as turn rows during tillage and cultivation operations.

- Avoid tillage and planting operations parallel to the grassed waterway. Parallel operations may divert runoff water from the grassed waterway and lead to the formation of gullies adjacent to the waterway.
- Prevent trees and brush from growing in the waterway. Control tree and bush growth by hand cutting or mowing.
- Mow waterways as needed to maintain a healthy, vigorous sod in accordance with applicable Farm Bill program requirements and maintenance agreements/requirements.
- Control noxious weeds.
- Do not use the waterway as a field road.
- Avoid crossing the waterway with heavy equipment when the waterway is wet.
- Lift tillage equipment and turn off chemical application equipment when crossing the waterway.
- Repair any broken or damaged subsurface drain lines adjacent to or in the waterway.
- If fabric, rock, or other types of checks have been installed, inspect them after significant runoff events. Repair as needed. Fill any holes that have eroded and reshape and reseed the area.
- Inspect the waterway outlet to make sure it is stable. Repair and re-seed any eroded areas. If there is an outlet structure, repair any damaged components or areas.

The producer is responsible for proper operation and maintenance for as long as the grassed waterway practice is used but no less than life of the practice, 10 years, and as may be required by federal, state, or local laws or regulations. Please contact your local IA NRCS field office for more information.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Extension and Outreach



Figure 1: Properly maintained waterways carry water off the field and prevent gully erosion. Photo credit: Rachel Kennedy, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

The Manure Scoop

In this month's [Manure Scoop](#), learn more about estimating flow rates when pumping manure and why accounting for differences in viscosity of manure often isn't worth the extra effort.

Maintaining your Manure Storage

Frequently evaluate manure storage structures to ensure they are properly maintained and provide preventative maintenance when necessary. Utilize the checklist below to prevent manure from overflowing or discharging from a storage system.

1. *Monitor the operating level of your manure storages.* Gauge how much manure is already in storage. Keep track of how much manure is in the structure; this can give you an idea if you have enough storage capacity to make it to your next land application window. Monitoring levels can also alert you if something unexpected is occurring.
2. *Conduct a visual inspection.* Walk around the structure and pay close attention to inlet points, connections, and where the sidewalls connect to the base. To make a visual inspection easier, make sure you are mowing around the structure, cutting down trees, watching for animal burrows, and making sure clean water is being diverted away from the structure.

3. *Evaluate odor.* Make it part of your routine to go around your farm once a week and make note of odor intensity and what neighbors may be smelling. While there are not usually easy fixes for odor issues, the [Air Management Practices Assessment Tool \(AMPAT\)](#) has information about odor options.
4. *Review safety protocols.* Review and update safety protocols as necessary. Take time to check any fences, escape ladders, and warning signs posted to make sure they are still in good condition.



Figure 2: Maintaining area around storage structure, including mowing and tree removal, makes conducting a visual inspection easier. Photo credit: Rachel Kennedy, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach

Events

July 25, 2018

[Maximize Manure With Nitrogen Stabilizers
Webinar](#)

August 7, 2018

Mason City, Iowa

[Farmland Drainage Workshop](#)

August 15, 2018

Fort Dodge, Iowa

[Farmland Drainage Workshop](#)

August 15-16, 2018

Brookings, South Dakota

[Manure Expo](#)

August 21-23, 2018

Nashua, Iowa

[Iowa Drainage School](#)