Name of Practice: GRASS FILTER STRIPS
DCR Specification No. WQ-1

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's grass filter strip best management practice that are applicable to all contracts entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

Grass filter strips are vegetative buffers that are located along the banks of water courses to filter runoff, anchor soil particles, and protect banks against scour and erosion. Even the best conservation measures on a farm allow some soil movement during heavy rains. Filter strips are the stream's last line of defense against pollution. Since filter strips trap eroded soil, they help keep sediment out of streams. The strips also improve water quality by filtering out fertilizers, pesticides, and microorganisms that otherwise might reach waterways. In addition, grass filter strips along streams serve as environmental corridors. They provide valuable food, cover, and travel ways for some wildlife species. As a result, they permit a greater diversity of wildlife, which, in turn, contributes to a more stable environment. As well, these living filters are aesthetically pleasing.

Cost-share will be provided to install and maintain grass filter strips that are located adjacent to cropland, permanent hayland (when recommended in an approved resource management plan), or animal holding areas.

B. Policies and Specifications for establishing filter strips for water quality

1. In order to be eligible In order to be eligible for cost-share or tax credit, producers must be fully implementing a current Nutrient Management Plan (NMP) on all agricultural production acreage contained within the field that this practice will be implemented on. The NMP must comply with all requirements set forth in the Nutrient Management Training and Certification Regulations, (4VAC50-85 et seq.) and the Virginia Nutrient Management Standards and Criteria (revised July 2014), must be prepared and certified by a Virginia certified nutrient management planner, and must be on file with the local District before any cost-share payment is made to the participant. Plans shall also contain any specific production management criteria designated in the BMP practice (4VACV50-85-130G).

2. Filter strips planned for sediment and related pollutant control are subject to the following state specifications. Grass filter strips shall be designed and installed to filter sheet flow, rather than concentrated flow. If concentrated flow will occur, land smoothing or the use of some other BMP or combination of BMPs may be required (such as grassed waterways and structures for water control).

Filters must be a minimum 35' in width. The maximum filter width eligible for cost-share payment and tax credit is 100', except for wider segments of a contoured filter where the contour is typically 35' to 100' wide.

3. Filters must be located within 100-feet of a live or intermittent waterway, open sinkhole, abandoned well or Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act Resource Protection Area as defined by local ordinance. An intermittent waterway is considered as being, but not limited to, any channel or flood prone area where periodic water flow or storage is diverted by surface drainage. Grass filter strips may be installed along intermittent waterways where judged appropriate and feasible by the local technical authority.

   All trees, stumps, brush, rocks and similar materials that may interfere with installing the filter strip should be removed. The materials should be disposed of in a manner that will not degrade the quality of the environment or interfere with the proper functioning of the filter strip.

4. No-till planting is preferable. If grading is necessary, conventional equipment can be used for preparing the seedbed, fertilizing and maintenance.

5. Lime and fertilize according to soil test to assure proper establishment. Established filter strips shall not receive any applications of nitrogen or phosphorus.

6. Hayland is considered cropland if it is in rotation with row crops during the 5-year life span of the grass filter strip.

7. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications.

8. State cost-share and tax credit will be provided only one time per filter strip, while that land is under the same ownership.

9. Select an appropriate planting mix for filtering runoff and protecting water quality from the NRCS Plant Establishment Guide for Virginia.

10. Maintenance
    i. In cropland, a vegetative filter strip should be maintained on each side of the watercourse.
    ii. Protect the filter strip from damage by livestock.
    iii. Do not use as a roadway.
    iv. Avoid operations that leave tillage or wheel marks.
    v. Woody stems should not be allowed to exceed 2 inches in diameter.
    vi. Avoid damaging filter area with herbicides.

vii. Hay may be harvested from grass filter strips except when using wildlife option.

11. Filter strips planned for runoff from concentrated livestock areas or controlled overland flows for the treatment of liquid wastes are subject to NRCS Specification 393 Filter Strip. This practices subject to NRCS Standards 393 Filter Strip, 466 Land Smoothing, 572 Spoil Spreading and Leveling.

12. All practice components including the vegetative cover implemented must be maintained for a minimum of 5 years following the calendar year of certification of completion. Cost-Share and tax credit must be refunded if the operator destroys the cover during this time. The lifespan begins on Jan. 1 of the calendar year following the year of implementation. By accepting either a cost-share payment or a state tax credit for this practice the participant agrees to maintain all practice components for the specified lifespan. This practice is subject to spot check by the District throughout the lifespan of the practice and failure to maintain the practice may result in reimbursement of cost share and/or tax credits.

C. Rate(s)

1. The state cost-share payment alone or when combined with any other cost-share program will not exceed 75% of the total eligible cost, or a maximum of $100/acre for 35' to 100' wide filter strips. WQ-1 installed on permanent hayland in accordance with an RMP is eligible for $100/acre.

2 As set forth by Virginia Code § 58.1-339.3 and §58.1-439.5, Virginia currently provides a tax credit for implementation of certain BMP practices. The current tax credit rate, which is subject to change in accordance with the Code of Virginia, is 25% of the total eligible cost not to exceed $17,500.00.

3. If a participant receives cost-share, only the participant’s eligible out-of-pocket share of the project cost is used to determine the tax credit.

D. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and District staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE. Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA) for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

METHOD OF CALCULATING EROSION REDUCTION FOR FILTER STRIP (WQ-1)

The effectiveness of vegetative filter strip is directly related to a variety of site-specific conditions. Except for the actual area of grass vegetation, filter strips do not reduce active erosion in the contributing field, but only trap a percentage of the delivered sediment passing through this grass vegetation. Not all of the sediment that occurs in the field reaches the filter strip. For these reasons, the effectiveness of a filter strip must take into account sediment delivery and trapping efficiency in the calculation of water quality benefits.

Step 1: Determine size of filter strip and erosion rate.

a. Determine the length (ft.) and width (ft) for calculating the area (acres) of the filter strip. Acres will be the extent technically authorized.

b. Using RUSLE2, determine soil loss occurring in the field. Place this erosion rate in under the Sheet and Rill (tons/ac/yr) erosion reduction field in the Tracking Program

Step 2: Determine trapping efficiency of the filter area.

a. Determine the amount of delivered sediment to the filter strip by calculating the effective length of slope of the contributing field to the filter area. Maximum length allowed is 400 feet. Multiply the length of the filter strip (lfs) from Step 1 times the length of slope. Divide this number by 43,560 sq. ft. /acre to determine the contributing acreage.

$$\frac{\text{Length of Filter Strip x Length of Slope}}{43{,}560}$$

Next, the contributing acreage is multiplied by the soil loss rate occurring on the field (previously calculated in Step #1) times a sediment delivery ratio (SDR) occurring in the field itself. Assume a SDR of 0.5.

Area x Erosion Rate x SDR = Delivered Sediment Load

b. Determine the amount trapped by multiplying the delivered sediment load times the trapping coefficient of the vegetation.

Sediment Load x Trapping Coefficient = Sediment Trapped

Use one of the following coefficients for your calculations:

Strip Width	Coefficient
35'	0.35
50'	0.50
100'	0.75

This trapping efficiency expressed in tons/year is placed in under Gross Erosion Reduction in tons/yr. field of the Tracking Program.

Example: 1,000-foot filter strip is planned for a 50-acre field; the slope length of the contributing area is approximately 250 feet. US soil loss rate is approximately 6 tons/ac./year. The filter strip itself is 50' wide.

Step 1: Size of filter area is to be placed in Extent Requested - 1.15 acres.

Erosion rate of 6 tons/ac/year to be placed in Sheet & Rill Reduction.

Step 2: Trapping efficiency

a. Delivered Sediment

$$\frac{\text{Length of filter strip (1,000)} \times \text{Length of Slope (250)}}{43{,}560}$$

$\frac{1{,}000 \times 250}{43{,}560}$ = 5.7 acres of contributing field

Area (5.7 ac) x Erosion Rate (6 tons/ac/yr) x SDR (0.5)

5.7 x 6 x 0.5 = Delivered Sediment Load of 17.1

b. Trapping coefficient

Sediment Load (17.1) x Trapping Coefficient (0.5) = 8.55

Round 8.55 up to 9 and place under Gross Erosion Reduction.