STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR GRASSED WATERWAY

Definition

A natural or man-made channel of parabolic or trapezoidal cross-section that is below adjacent ground level and is stabilized by suitable vegetation. The flow channel is normally wide and shallow and conveys the runoff down the slope.

Purpose

The purpose of a grassed waterway is to convey runoff without causing damage by erosion.

Conditions Where Practice Applies

Grass waterways are used where added vegetative protection is needed to control erosion resulting from concentrated runoff.

Design Criteria

Capacity

The minimum capacity shall be that required to confine the peak rate of runoff expected from a 10-year frequency rainfall event or a higher frequency corresponding to the hazard involved. This requirement for confinement may be waived on slopes of less than one (1) percent where out-of-bank flow will not cause erosion or property damage.

Peak rates of runoff values used in determining the capacity requirements shall be computed by TR-55, Urban Hydrology for Small Watersheds, or other appropriate methods.
Where there is base flow, it shall be handled by a stone center, subsurface drain, or other suitable means since sustained wetness usually prevents adequate vegetative cover. The cross-sectional area of the stone center or subsurface drain size to be provided shall be determined by using a flow rate of 0.1 cfs/acre or by actual measurement of the maximum base flow.

Velocity

Please see Table 5B.1, Diversion Maximum Permissible Design Velocities, for seed, soil, and velocity variables.

Cross Section

The design water surface elevation of a grassed waterway receiving water from diversions or other tributary channels shall be equal to or less than the design water surface elevation in the diversion or other tributary channels.

The top width of parabolic waterways shall not exceed 30 feet and the bottom width of trapezoidal waterways shall not exceed 15 feet unless multiple or divided waterways, stone center, or other means are provided to control meandering of low flows.

Structural Measures

In cases where grade or erosion problems exist, special control measures may be needed such as lined waterways (5B.17), or grade stabilization measures (5B.31). Where needed, these measures will be supported by adequate design computations. For typical cross sections of waterways with riprap sections or stone centers, refer to Figure 5B.8 on page 5B.13.

The design procedures for parabolic and trapezoidal channels are available in the NRCS Engineering Field Handbook; Figure 5B.9 on page 5B.14 also provides a design chart for parabolic waterway.

Outlets

Each waterway shall have a stable outlet. The outlet may be another waterway, a stabilized open channel, grade stabilization structure, etc. In all cases, the outlet must discharge in such a manner as not to cause erosion. Outlets shall be constructed and stabilized prior to the operation of the waterway.

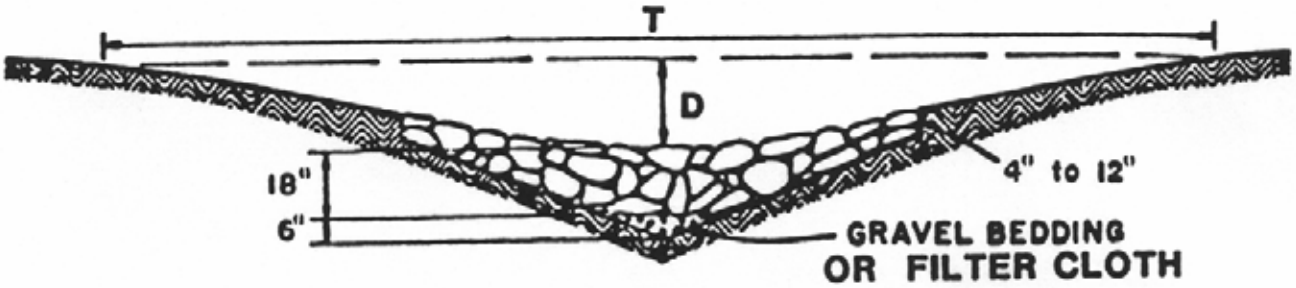
Stabilization

Waterways shall be stabilized in accordance with the appropriate vegetative stabilization standard and specifications, and will be dependent on such factors as slope, soil class, etc.

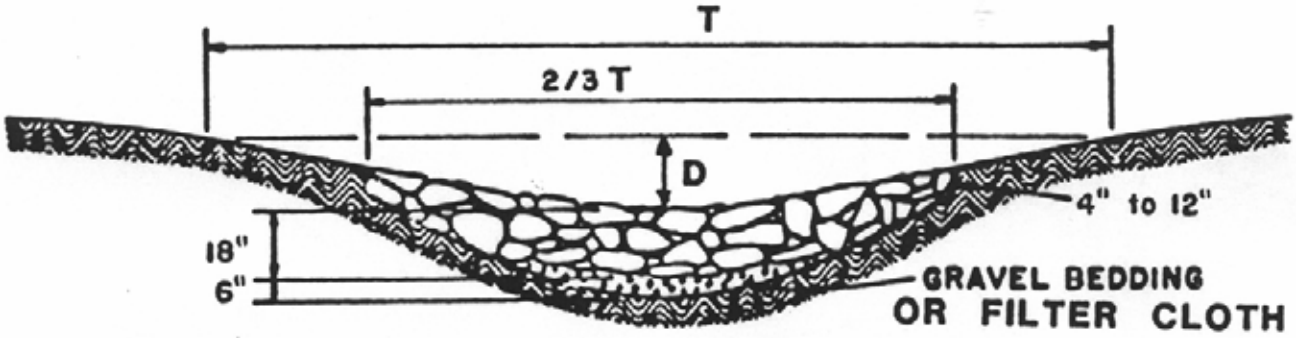
Construction Specifications

See Figure 5B.10 on page 5B.15 for details.

Figure 5B.8
Typical Waterway Cross Sections



Waterway with stone center drain. "V" section shaped by motor grader.



Waterway with stone center drain. Rounded section shaped by bulldozer.

Figure 5B.9
Parabolic Waterway Design Chart (USDA - NRCS)

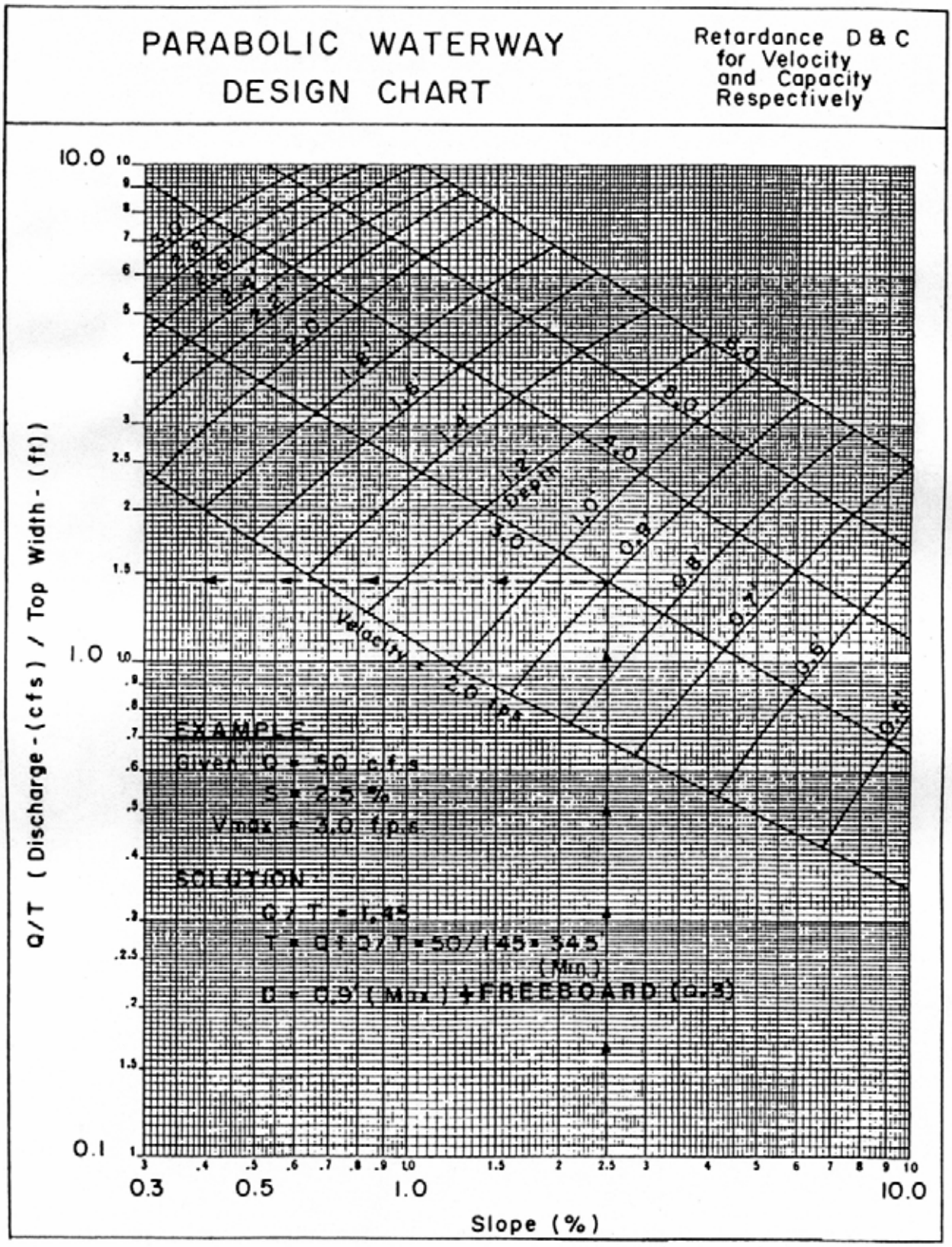
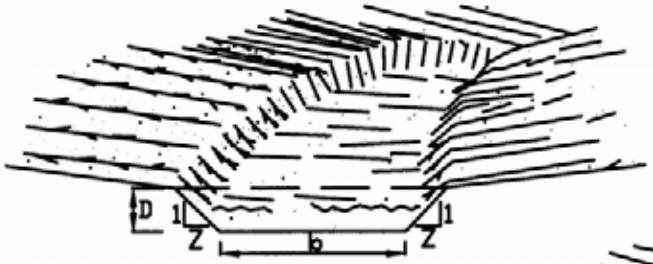


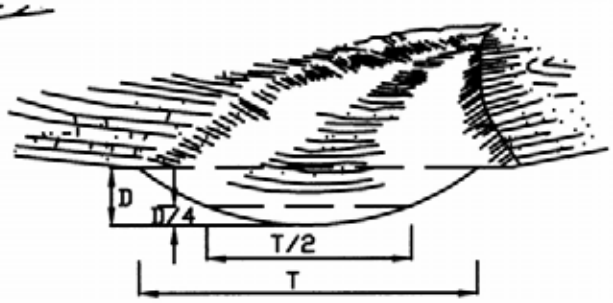
Figure 5B.10
Grassed Waterway

SYMBOL

GL



TRAPEZIODAL CROSS SECTION



PARABOLIC CROSS SECTION

CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATIONS

1. ALL TREES, BRUSH, STUMPS, OBSTRUCTIONS, AND OTHER OBJECTIONABLE MATERIAL SHALL BE REMOVED AND DISPOSED OF SO AS NOT TO INTERFERE WITH THE PROPER FUNCTIONING OF THE WATERWAY.
2. THE WATERWAY SHALL BE EXCAVATED OR SHAPED TO LINE, GRADE, AND CROSS SECTION AS REQUIRED TO MEET THE CRITERIA SPECIFIED HEREIN, AND BE FREE OF BANK PROJECTIONS OR OTHER IRREGULARITIES WHICH WILL IMPEDE NORMAL FLOW.
3. FILLS SHALL BE COMPACTED AS NEEDED TO PREVENT UNEQUAL SETTLEMENT THAT WOULD CAUSE DAMAGE IN THE COMPLETE WATERWAY.
4. ALL EARTH REMOVED AND NOT NEEDED IN CONSTRUCTION SHALL BE SPREAD OR DISPOSED OF SO THAT IT WILL NOT INTERFERE WITH THE FUNCTIONING OF THE WATERWAY.
5. STABILIZATION SHALL BE DONE ACCORDING TO THE APPROPRIATE STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR VEGETATIVE PRACTICES.
   A. FOR DESIGN VELOCITIES OF LESS THAN 3.5 FT. PER. SEC., SEEDING AND MULCHING MAY BE USED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VEGETATION. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT, WHEN CONDITIONS PERMIT, TEMPORARY WATERWAYS OR OTHER MEANS SHOULD BE USED TO PREVENT WATER FROM ENTERING THE WATERWAY DURING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE VEGETATION.
   B. FOR DESIGN VELOCITIES OF MORE THAN 3.5 FT. PER. SEC., THE WATERWAY SHALL BE STABILIZED WITH SOD, WITH SEEDING PROTECTED BY JUTE OR EXCELSIOR MATTING OR WITH SEEDING AND MULCHING INCLUDING TEMPORARY DIVERSION OF THE WATER UNTIL THE VEGETATION IS ESTABLISHED.
   C. STRUCTURAL - VEGETATIVE PROTECTION
   SUBSURFACE DRAIN FOR BASE FLOW SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED AS SHOWN ON THE STANDARD DRAWING AND AS SPECIFIED IN THE STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS FOR SUBSURFACE DRAIN.

ADAPTED FROM DETAILS PROVIDED BY: USDA - NRCS, NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION, NEW YORK STATE SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

GRASSED WATERWAY