

Big Pine Creek Watershed Project

Best Management Practices Fact Sheet

Grassed Waterway



Photo courtesy of United States Department of Agriculture

A **grassed waterway** is a shaped or graded channel that is established with suitable vegetation to carry surface water at a non-erosive velocity to a stable outlet.

Purposes of grassed waterways include, but are not limited to:

- Conveying runoff from the surrounding land of higher elevation without causing erosion or flooding.
- Reducing gully erosion.
- Protecting and improving surface water quality.

Grassed waterways are typically established in areas within a landscape where concentrated water runoff is causing erosion gullies to form. The amount of precipitation that runs off the soil surface rather than infiltrating down into the soil profile is increased by tillage and other farming activities that increase soil compaction and decrease soil organic matter and macro-pore content. For these reasons, the establishment or refurbishing of a grassed waterway should, when possible, be coupled with other practices that aim to increase the rate of water infiltration into the soil.

Contact Info for the Soil & Water Conservation Districts in the Big Pine Creek Watershed

Benton County: Jon Charlesworth 765-884-1090 x3 jon.charlesworth@in.usda.gov

Warren County: Deb Lane 765-762-2443 x3 debra.lane@in.nacdnet.net

White County: Sharon Watson 574-583-5962 x3 sharon.watson@in.nacdnet.net

Grassed waterways are often constructed in combination with other related practices. These practices may include one or more of the following:

- Subsurface tile drainage to keep the waterway channel dry (refer to NRCS conservation practice standard code 606).
- Lining the outlet of the waterway with Riprap in combination with reinforcement fabric. In some cases this Riprap is coated with concrete or grout (see NRCS conservation practice standard code 468).
- Mulching the waterway during the period of vegetation establishment with wheat straw or an erosion control blanket (refer to NRCS conservation practice standard code 484).
- Constructing grade stabilization structures in the waterway or at the waterway outlet to reduce the velocity and energy of the water being conveyed by the waterway (see NRCS conservation practice standard code 410).

More detailed information on each of these practices can be found at:
<http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/toc.aspx?CatID=4288>

Available financial assistance:

The Big Pine Creek Watershed group will be offering cost-share incentives to help producers adopt best management practices (BMPs) aimed at reducing the amount of nutrients, sediment and bacteria entering our surface waters. **Grassed waterways** are one of the BMPs we want to encourage. The financial incentives for grassed waterways will come in the form of reimbursement of 75% of the prevailing NRCS EQIP payment rates. Applications for cost share assistance are available from the Soil & Water Conservation District offices in Benton, Warren and White counties.

- Applications for cost share assistance are available from the Soil & Water Conservation District offices in Benton, Warren and White counties.
- Closing dates for ranking periods are still to be determined. Please check the watershed group's webpage which can be accessed via the Benton County SWCD website bentoncountyswcd.org
- Applications will be ranked based on merit. Pairing grassed waterways with other conservation practices such as cover crops and/or filter strips will increase the ranking score of the application.
- Successful applicants will sign a contract spelling out the terms of the cost-share agreement.
- Waterway will be designed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In order for the waterway construction or waterway refurbishing to be eligible for reimbursement, the final construction must be inspected and signed off on by a member of the NRCS technical service team.

- If the finished construction project meets the NRCS conservation practice standards and passes final NRCS inspection, the applicant will be mailed a reimbursement check.