USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Practice Standard Overview

Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580)

Streambank and shoreline protection consists of applying vegetative or structural measures to stabilize and protect banks of streams, lakes, estuaries, or excavated channels from scour or erosion.

Practice Information

Streambank and shoreline protection can be used to prevent the loss of land adjacent to the water. It can also be used to reduce water and erosion damage to land use or buildings or to protect known historical, archeological, and traditional cultural properties. This practice can also be used to maintain the flow capacity of streams or channels, reduce the offsite effects of sediment resulting from bank erosion, or improve or enhance the stream corridor for fish and wildlife habitat, aesthetics, or recreation.

This is one of the more complex conservation practices because of the amount of analysis needed to determine the cause of the problem. When the cause of the streambank or shoreline instability is within the control of the landowner, treatment will also include ways to address the cause. Unlimited livestock access is an example of something that can be changed.

In most cases, the cause of the instability is not within the control of the landowner. An example of this would be development of the upstream watershed. In this case, treatments may be focused on limiting further damage.

This practice has a minimum expected life of 20 years. Operation and maintenance requirements will be specific to the type of treatments selected for the site. The site must be inspected periodically and after storm events. Vegetation may have to be planted multiple times to ensure good establishment. Structural measures, such as riprap or gabions, may need to be repaired or replaced.

Common Associated Practices

Streambank and Shoreline Protection (580) is commonly associated with conservation practices such as Riparian Forest Buffer (391), Riparian Herbaceous Buffer (390), Fence (382), Channel Bed Stabilization (584), and Open Channel (582).

For further information, contact your local NRCS field office.