

NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

IRRIGATION WATER CONVEYANCE
MODULAR POLYETHYLENE DITCH AND CANAL LINING

(ft)
CODE 788

DEFINITION

A fixed lining of impervious material installed in an existing or newly constructed irrigation field ditch, or irrigation canal, or lateral.

PURPOSE

To prevent waterlogging of land, to maintain water quality, to prevent erosion, and to reduce water losses.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

This standard applies to linings made of polyethylene modules installed in a preformed ditch or canal section.

Linings to which this standard apply are restricted to ditches having characteristics as follows:

- Maximum Top width.....36 in.
- Minimum Slope.....0.005 ft/ft

This standard applies to both the ditch and the polyethylene lining.

Ditches and canals to be lined shall serve as integral parts of an irrigation water distribution or conveyance system designed to facilitate the conservation use of soil and water resources on a farm or group of farms.

Water supplies and irrigation deliveries for the area served shall be sufficient to make irrigation practical for the crops to be grown and the irrigation water application methods to be used.

Lined ditches and canals shall either be located where they will not be susceptible to damage from side drainage flooding or be protected from such damage. Linings shall not be installed in areas susceptible to fire.

DESIGN CRITERIA

Capacity. A lined ditch or canal shall have enough capacity to meet its requirement as part of the

planned irrigation water distribution or conveyance system without danger of overtopping. Design capacity shall be based upon the following, whichever is greater:

1. The capacity shall be adequate to deliver the volume of water required to meet the peak consumptive use of the crops.
2. The capacity shall be large enough to provide an adequate irrigation stream for all methods of irrigation planned.

For design purposes, the carrying capacity of steel-lined ditches and canals shall be considered to be equal to the capacity as computed by Manning’s Formula, using a coefficient of roughness *n* of not less than 0.010.

Velocity. A design velocity in excess of 1.7 times the critical velocity shall be restricted to straight reaches that discharge into a section or structure designed to reduce the velocity to less than the critical velocity. The maximum velocity in these straight reaches shall be 15 ft/s.

Freeboard. The required freeboard varies with the size of the ditch or canal, the velocity of the water, the horizontal and vertical alignment, the amount of storm or waste water that may be intercepted, and the change in the water surface elevation that may occur when any control structure is operating. The minimum freeboard for any lined ditch or canal shall be 0.25 ft.

If the velocity is within \pm 30 percent of critical, the freeboard shall be at least 0.50 ft. The minimum freeboard requirement is based on the assumption that the finished channel bottom elevations will vary no more than 0.1 ft from the design elevations. Construction deviations greater than 0.2 ft shall not be permitted. If a construction deviation greater

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than 0.1 ft is permitted, the minimum freeboard shall be increased an additional 0.33 ft.

Additional freeboard shall be provided as required by slope, velocity, depth of flow, alignment, obstructions, curves, and other site conditions.

Water surface elevations. All lined ditches and canals shall be designed so that the water surface elevations at field takeout points are high enough to provide the required flow onto the field surface. If ditch checks or other control structures are to provide the necessary head, the backwater effect must be considered in computing freeboard requirements. The required elevation of the water surface above the field surface varies according to the type of takeout or device used and the amount of water to be delivered. A minimum head of 0.33 ft. shall be provided.

Ditch or canal pad or foundation. Ditch and canal banks shall be built up with earth to a height sufficient to support the full height of the lining and to provide an anchorage for the top edge of the lining.

Berms and ditch banks shall be wide enough to prevent excessive deposition in cut sections and to insure support of the lining in fill sections. The minimum width shall be 1 ft. If the bank or berm is to be used as a roadway, the minimum top width shall be adequate for the purpose.

Outside bank slopes and slopes above the berm elevation in cut sections must be flat enough to insure stability.

Related structures. Plans for ditch or canal lining installations shall provide for adequate inlets, outlets, turnouts, checks, crossings, and other related structures needed for successful conservation irrigation.

Structures shall be constructed or installed in such a way that the capacity or the freeboard of the ditch is not reduced and the effectiveness of the lining is not impaired.

All structures shall meet NRCS standards and specifications for the type of structure used.

Bulkheads shall be formed to fit the lining and of sufficient size to extend at least 1 foot into the earthen ditch pad for the entire width of the ditch lining. They shall be installed at the beginning and end of the lining section and at intervening points, as needed, to provide adequate anchorage.

Materials. Polyethylene lining material shall meet the requirements detailed in the specifications under "Materials".

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider the following for planning, design, installation, and operation of the practice:

- Effects on the water budget, especially on volumes and rates of runoff, infiltration, evaporation, transpiration, and deep percolation and ground water recharge.
- Effects on downstream flows or aquifers that would affect other water uses or users.
- Potential use for irrigation water management.
- Potential changes in growth and transpiration of vegetation located next to the conveyance because of the elimination of leakage from the system.
- Effects of installing the lining on the erosion of the earth conveyance and the movement of sediment and soluble and sediment-attached substances carried by water.
- Effects on the movement of dissolved substances to ground water.
- Effects on wetlands or water-related wildlife habitats.
- Effects on the visual quality of water resources.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for installing polyethylene irrigation ditches and canal linings shall be in keeping with this standard and shall describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended purposes.