STD & SPEC 3.28

# SUBSURFACE DRAIN

SD

## Definition

A perforated conduit such as pipe, tubing or tile installed beneath the ground to intercept and convey ground water.

## Purposes

1. To prevent sloping soils from becoming excessively wet and subject to sloughing.

2. To improve the quality of the growth medium in excessively wet areas by lowering the water table.

3. To drain stormwater detention areas or structures.

## Conditions Where Practice Applies

Wherever excess water must be removed from the soil. The soil must be deep and permeable enough to allow an effective system to be installed. Either a gravity outlet must be available or pumping must be provided. These standards do no apply to foundation drains.

## Planning Considerations

Subsurface drainage systems are of two types, relief drains and interceptor drains. Relief drains are used either to lower the water table in order to improve the growth of vegetation, or to remove surface water. They are installed along a slope and drain in the direction of the slope. They can be installed in a gridiron pattern, a herringbone pattern, or a random pattern (see Plate 3.28-1).

Interceptor drains are used to remove water as it seeps down a slope to prevent the soil from becoming saturated and subject to slippage. They are installed across a slope and drain to the side of the slope. They usually consist of a single pipe or series of single pipes instead of a patterned layout (see Plate 3.28-2).

## Design Criteria

### Location

Tree roots can often clog subsurface drain systems. Consequently, sub-surface drains should be located such that there are no trees within 50 feet of the drain.

Relief Drains - Relief drains should be located through the center of wet areas. They should drain in the same direction as the slope.

Interceptor drains - Interceptor drains should be located on the uphill side of wet areas . They should be installed across the slope and drain to the side of the slope.

### Capacity of Drains

The required capacity of a subsurface drain depends upon its use.

Relief drains- Relief drains installed in a uniform pattern should remove a minimum of 1 inch of groundwater in 24 hours (0.042 cfs/acre). The design capacity must be increased accordingly to accommodate any surface water which enters directly into the system (see Plate 3.28-4).

Interceptor drains or relief drains in a random pattern- Interceptor drains or relief drains installed in a random pattern should remove a minimum of 1.5 cfs/1000 feet of length. This

value should be increased for sloping land according to the values in Table 3.28-A. In addition, if a flowing spring or surface water enters directly into the system, this flow must be accommodated and the design capacity must be increased accordingly to take care of this flow (see Plate 3.28-4).

**TABLE 3.28-A**

**WATER REMOVAL RATES FOR SLOPING LAND***

| Land Slope | Water Removal Rates |
|---|---|
| 2 - 5% | 1.65 cfs/1000 ft. |
| 6 - 12% | 1.80 cfs/1000 ft. |
| > 12% | 1.95 cfs/1000 ft. |

* These rates depend on the soil types where the drains are installed. Heavier soils may result in slower water removal rates.

Source: Va. DSWC

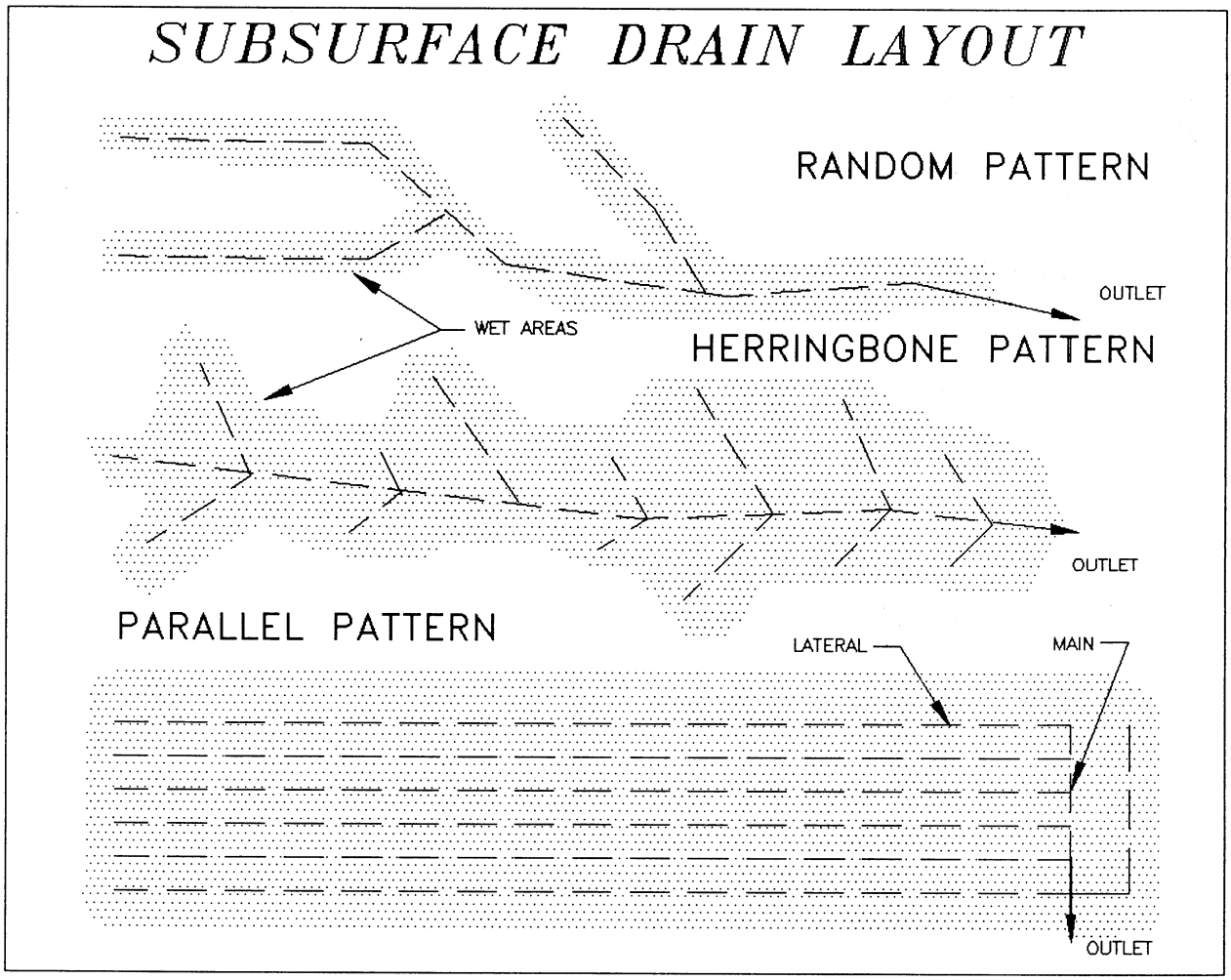
Size of Drains

Subsurface drains should be sized for the required capacity using Plates 3.28-6 and 3.28-7 in Appendix 3.28-a. The minimum diameter for a subsurface drain shall be 4 inches.

Depth and Spacing

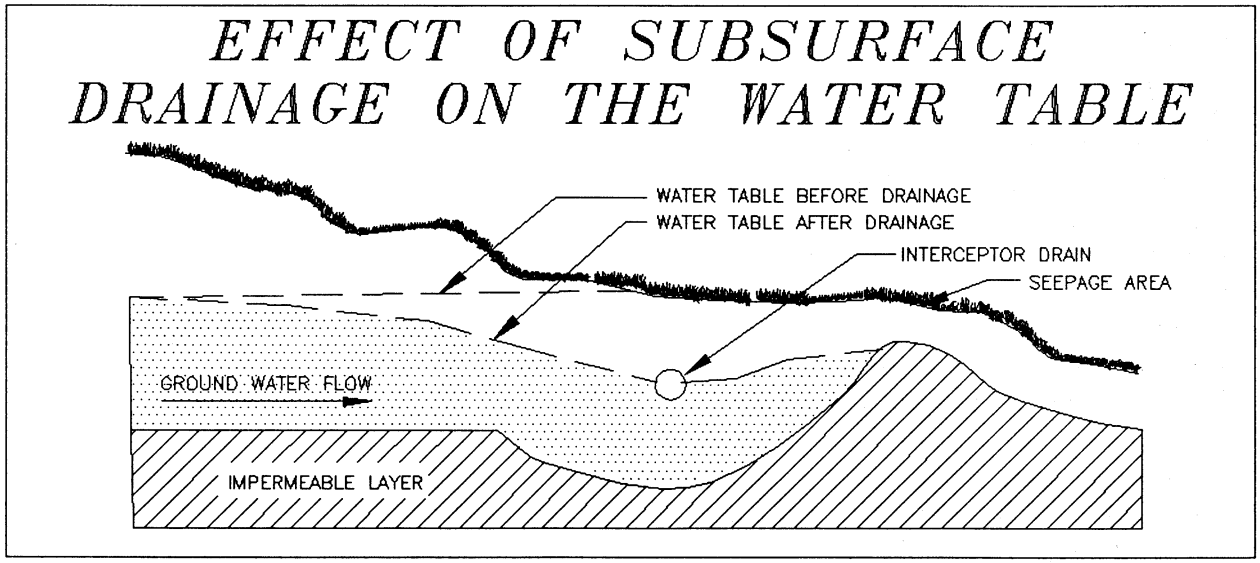
Relief Drains - Relief drains installed in a uniform pattern should have equal spacing between drains and the drains should be at the same depth. Maximum depth is limited by the allowable load on the pipe, depth to impermeable layers in the soil, and outlet requirements. The minimum depth is 24 inches under normal conditions. Twelve inches is acceptable where the drain will not be subject to equipment loading or frost action. Spacing between drains is dependent on soil permeability and the depth of the drain. In general, however, a depth of 3 feet and a spacing of 50 feet will be adequate. A more economical system may be designed., if the necessary information is available, by using the equations found in Appendix 3.28-a.

Interceptor drain - The depth of installation of an interceptor drain is influenced mainly by the depth to which the water table is to be lowered. The maximum depth is limited by the allowable load on the pipe and the depth to an impermeable layer. Minimum depth should be the same as for relief drains.




Source: USDA-SCS

Plate 3.28-1




Source: USDA-SCS

Plate 3.28-2

One interceptor drain is usually sufficient. However, if multiple drains are to be used, determining the required spacing can be difficult. The best approach is to install the first drain - then if seepage or high water table problems occur downslope, install an additional drain a suitable distance downslope. This distance can be calculated from equations found in Appendix 3.28-a.

Velocity and Grade

The minimum velocity required to prevent silting is 1.4 ft./sec. The line should be graded to achieve at least this velocity. Steep grades should be avoided, however. Table 3.28-B lists maximum velocities for various soil textures.

**TABLE 3.28-B**

**MAXIMUM VELOCITIES FOR VARIOUS SOIL TEXTURES**

| Soil Texture | Maximum Velocity (ft./sec.) |
|---|---|
| Sandy and Sandy Loam | 3.5 |
| Silt and Silt Loam | 5.0 |
| Silty Clay Loam | 6.0 |
| Clay and Clay Loam | 7.0 |
| Coarse Sand or Gravel | 9.0 |

Source: Va. DSWC

Envelopes

Envelopes shall be used around all drains for proper bedding and improved flow of groundwater into the drain. The envelope shall consist of 3 inches of VDOT #68 aggregate placed completely around the drain. The stone shall be encompassed by a filter cloth separator in order to prevent the migration of surrounding soil particles into the drain (see Plate 3.28-3). Filter cloth must meet the physical requirements noted in Std. & Spec. 3.19, RIPRAP.

Surface Water

Plate 3.28-4 shows two types of surface water inlets. The grated inlet should not be used where excessive sedimentation might be a problem.

Outlet

The outlet of the subsurface drain shall empty into a channel or some other watercourse which will remove the water from the outlet. It shall be above the mean water level in the receiving channel. It shall be protected from erosion, undermining, damage from periods of submergence, and the entry of small animals into the drain.

The outlet shall consist of a 10-foot section of corrugated metal, cast iron, steel or schedule 40 PVC pipe without perforations. No envelope material shall be used around the pipe. At least two-thirds of the outlet pipe length shall be buried.

Materials

Acceptable materials for subsurface drains include perforated, continuous closed-joint conduits of corrugated plastic, concrete, corrugated metal, asbestos cement, and bituminous fiber. The strength and durability of the pipe shall meet the requirements of the site in accordance with the manufacturer's specifications.

## Construction Specifications

1. The trench shall be constructed on a continuous grade with no reverse grades or low spots.

2. Soft or yielding soils under the drain shall be stabilized with gravel or other suitable material.

3. Deformed, warped, or otherwise unsuitable pipe shall not be used.

4. Envelopes or filter material shall be placed as specified with at least 3 inches of material on all sides of the pipe.

5. Backfilling shall be done immediately after placement of the pipe. No sections of pipe should remain uncovered overnight or during a rainstorm. Backfill material shall be placed in the trench in such a manner that the drain pipe is not displaced or damaged.

6. The outlet section of the drain shall consist of at least 10 feet of non-perforated corrugated metal, cast iron, steel or schedule 40 PVC pipe. At least two-thirds of its length shall be buried.

## Maintenance

1. Subsurface drains should be checked periodically to ensure that they are free-flowing and not clogged with sediment.

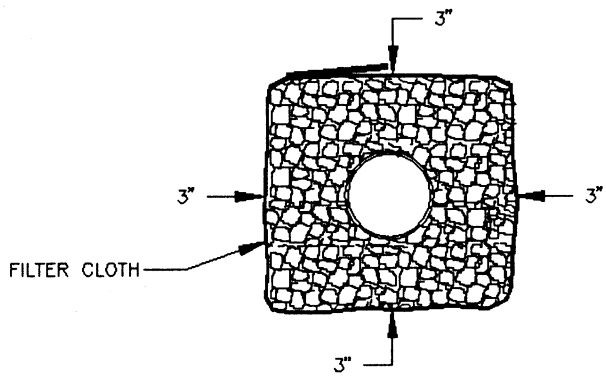
2. The outlet should be kept clean and free of debris.

3. Surface inlets should be kept open and free of sediment and other debris.

4. Trees located too close to a subsurface drain often clog the system with their roots. If a drain becomes clogged, relocate the drain or remove the trees.

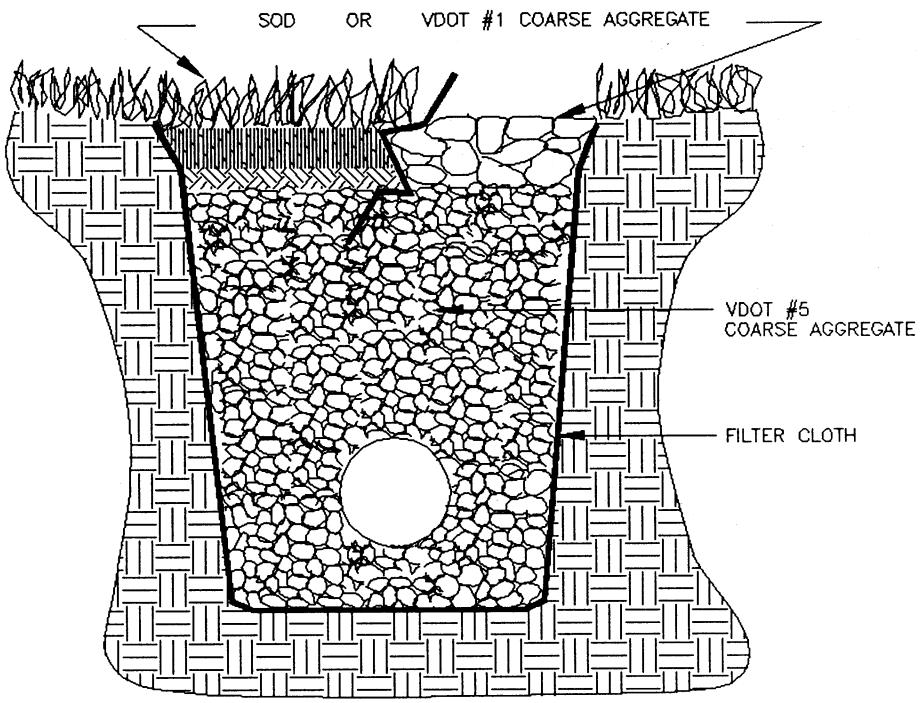
5. Where drains are crossed by heavy vehicles, the line should be checked to ensure that it is not crushed.

*DRAINAGE ENVELOPE*

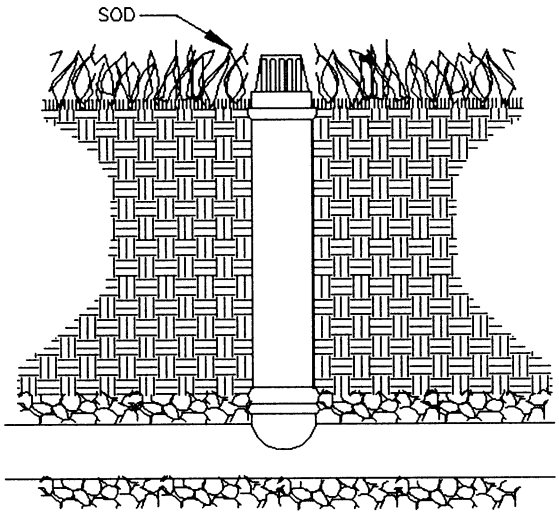



Source: USDA-SCS Plate 3.28-3

# *SURFACE INLETS*




NATURAL INLET




GRATED INLET

Source: USDA-SCS

Plate 3.28-4

## APPENDIX 3.28-a

Subsurface drains are not generally designed to flow under pressure and the hydraulic gradient is parallel with the grade line. Consequently, the flow is considered to be open channel and Manning's Equation can be used. The required drain size can be determined by the following procedure:

1. Determine the flow the drain must carry.

2. Determine the gradient of the drain

3. From Table 3.28-C, determine "n" for the type of drain pipe to be used. Choose the correct Plate (3.28-5 through 3.28-7) for the "n" just determined.

4. Enter the appropriate plate with the gradient of the pipe and the flow in the pipe. The intersection of the two lines must be to the right of the line for 1.4 ft./sec. If it is not, increase the gradient or flow capacity or both.

Example 1

Given:

A random subsurface drain is to be installed on a 1.0% grade, 700 feet in length, and using corrugated plastic pipe.

Calculate:

The required size of the drain pipe.

Solution:

From the Std. & Spec., the required capacity of the pipe is:

$$1.5\ ft.^3/\text{sec.}/1000\ ft.$$

$$Capacity = \frac{700}{1000} \times 1.5\ ft.^3/\text{sec.} = 1.05\ ft.^3/\text{sec.}$$

* From Table 3.28-C, n = 0.015 for corrugated plastic pipe.

* From Plate 3.28-6, choose an 8-inch pipe.

Example 2

Given:

A relief drain installed in a gridiron pattern of 8 laterals, 500 feet long, 0.5% grade, and 50 feet on centers. A main 400 feet in length on a 0.5% grade will connect to the laterals. Use bituminized fiber pipe for the main and laterals.

Calculate:

The required size of the drain pipe.

Solution:

The drainage area for each lateral is 25 feet on either side of the pipe times the length. Therefore:

$$\frac{50\ ft.\ \ x\ \ 500\ ft.}{43{,}560\ ft.^2/acre} = 0.57\ acre$$

From the Std. & Spec., the drains must remove 1 inch of water in 24 hours or 0.042 ft.$^3$/sec./acre.

$$0.042\ ft.^3/\text{sec.}/acre\ \ x\ \ 0.57\ acre = 0.02\ ft.^3/\text{sec.}$$

From Table 3.28-C, n = 0.013 for bituminized fiber pipe.

From Plate 3.28-5, a 4-inch pipe must be used for the laterals.

The first 25 feet of the main will drain 25 feet on either side of the pipe. The remaining 375 feet will drain only 25 feet on the side opposite from the laterals. In addition, the main will drain the laterals.

Drainage from main:

$$\frac{25\ ft.\ \ x\ \ 50\ ft.}{43{,}560\ ft.^2/acre} + \frac{375\ ft.\ \ x\ \ 25\ ft.}{43{,}560\ ft.^2/acre} = 0.24\ acre$$

Drainage from laterals:

$$8 \quad x \quad 0.57\ acre \quad = \quad 4.56\ acre$$

$$Total \quad = \quad 0.24 \quad + \quad 4.56 \quad = \quad 4.8\ acre$$

Required capacity:

$$0.042\ ft.^3/sec./acre \quad x \quad 4.8\ acre \quad = \quad 0.20\ ft.^3/sec.$$

From Plate 3.28-5, choose a 5-inch pipe for the main.

**TABLE 3.28-C**

**"n" VALUES FOR SUBSURFACE DRAIN PIPES**

| Composition of Pipe or Tubing | "n" Values |
|---|---|
| Asbestos Cement | 0.013 |
| Bituminized Fiber | 0.013 |
| Concrete | 0.015 |
| Corrugated Plastic | 0.015 |
| Corrugated Metal | 0.025 |

Source: Va. DSWC

Spacing of Relief Drains

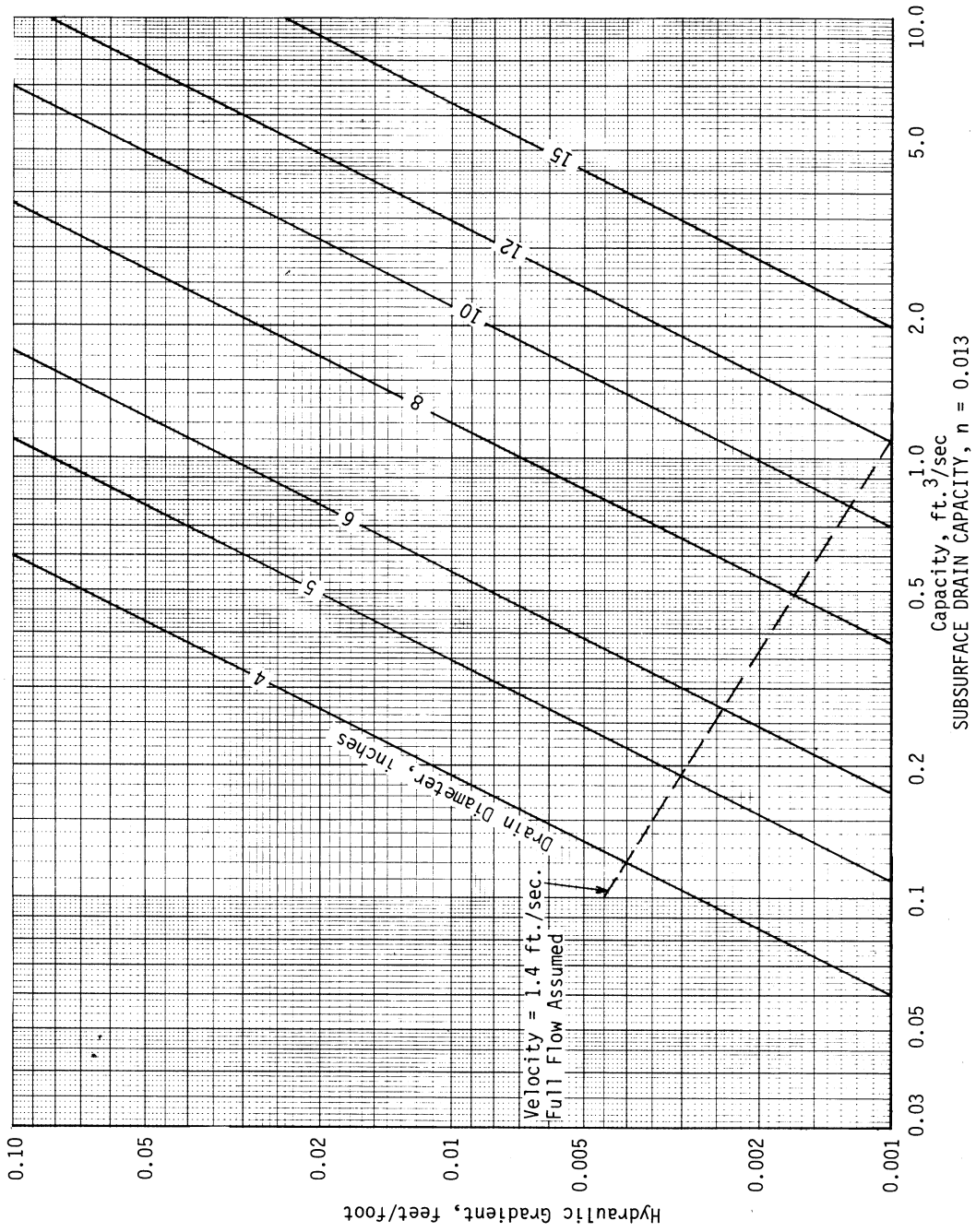
If the necessary information is known, the following equation can be used to calculate drain spacing in lieu of the recommended standard:

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{4k\ (M^2 + 2\ AM)}{q}}$$

Where,

S = drain spacing, feet

k = average hydraulic conductivity, in./hr. (for practical purposes, hydraulic conductivity is equal to permeability).




Source: USDA-SCS

Plate 3.28-5

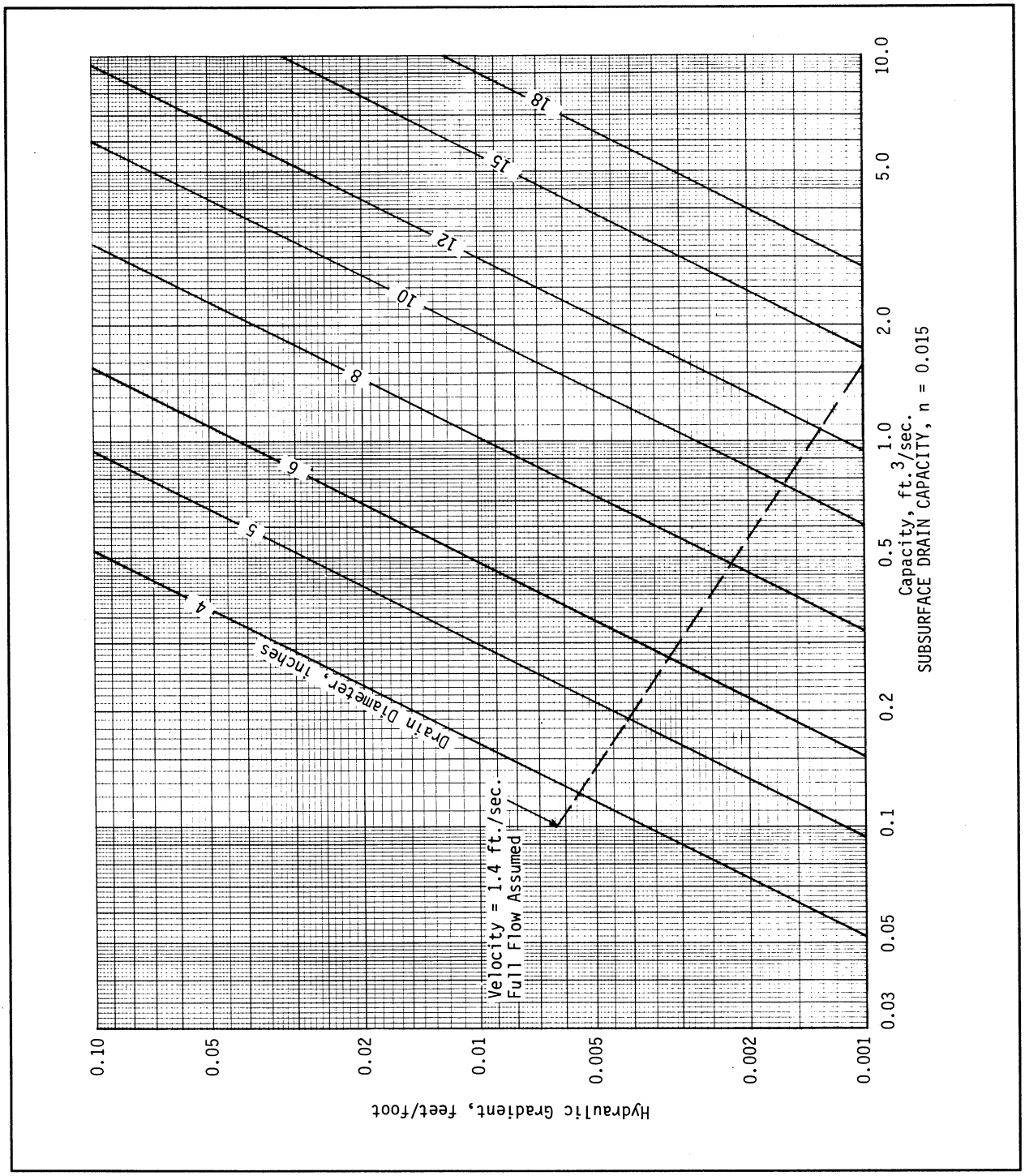



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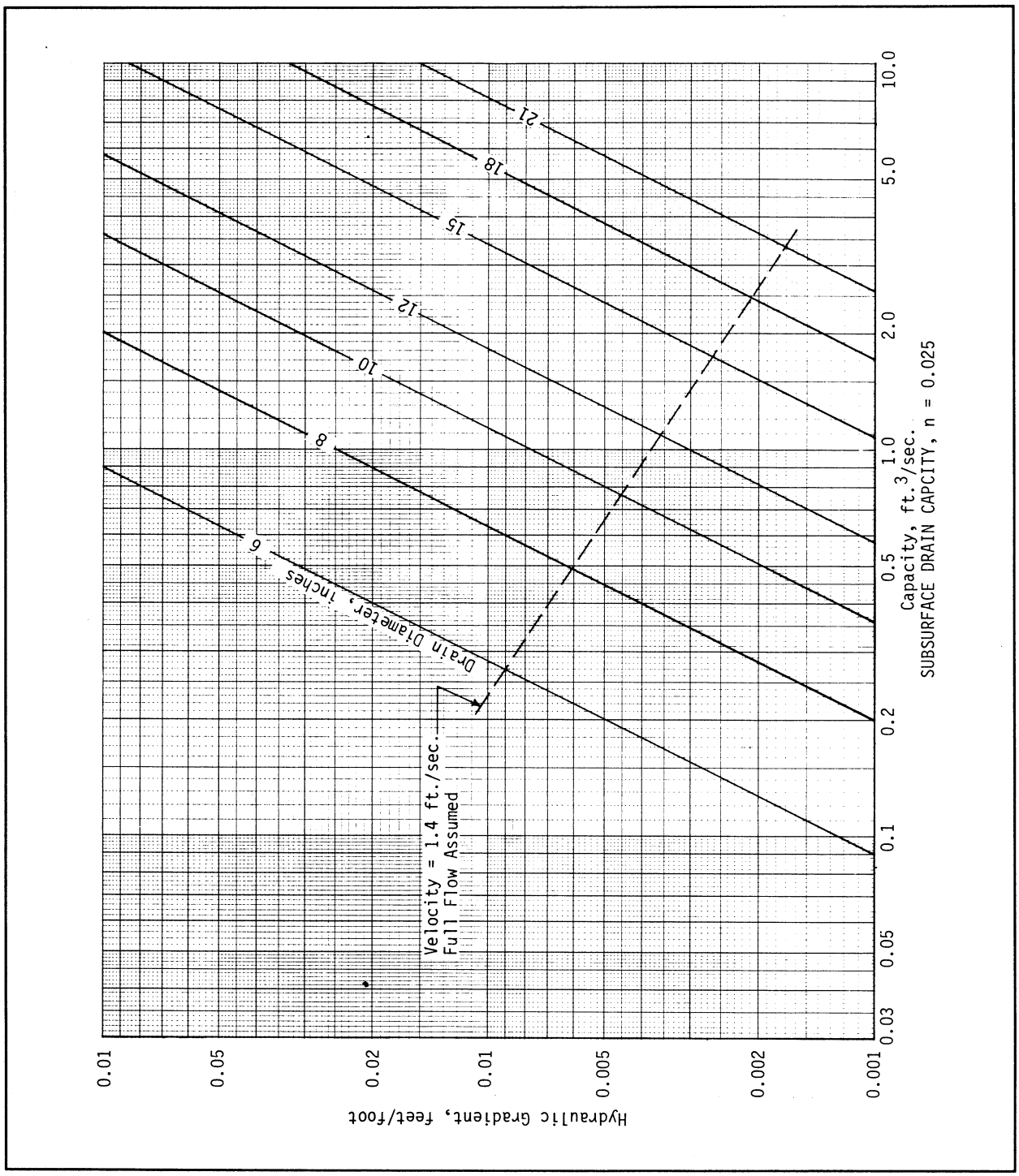
Plate 3.28-6




Source: USDA-SCS

Plate 3.28-7

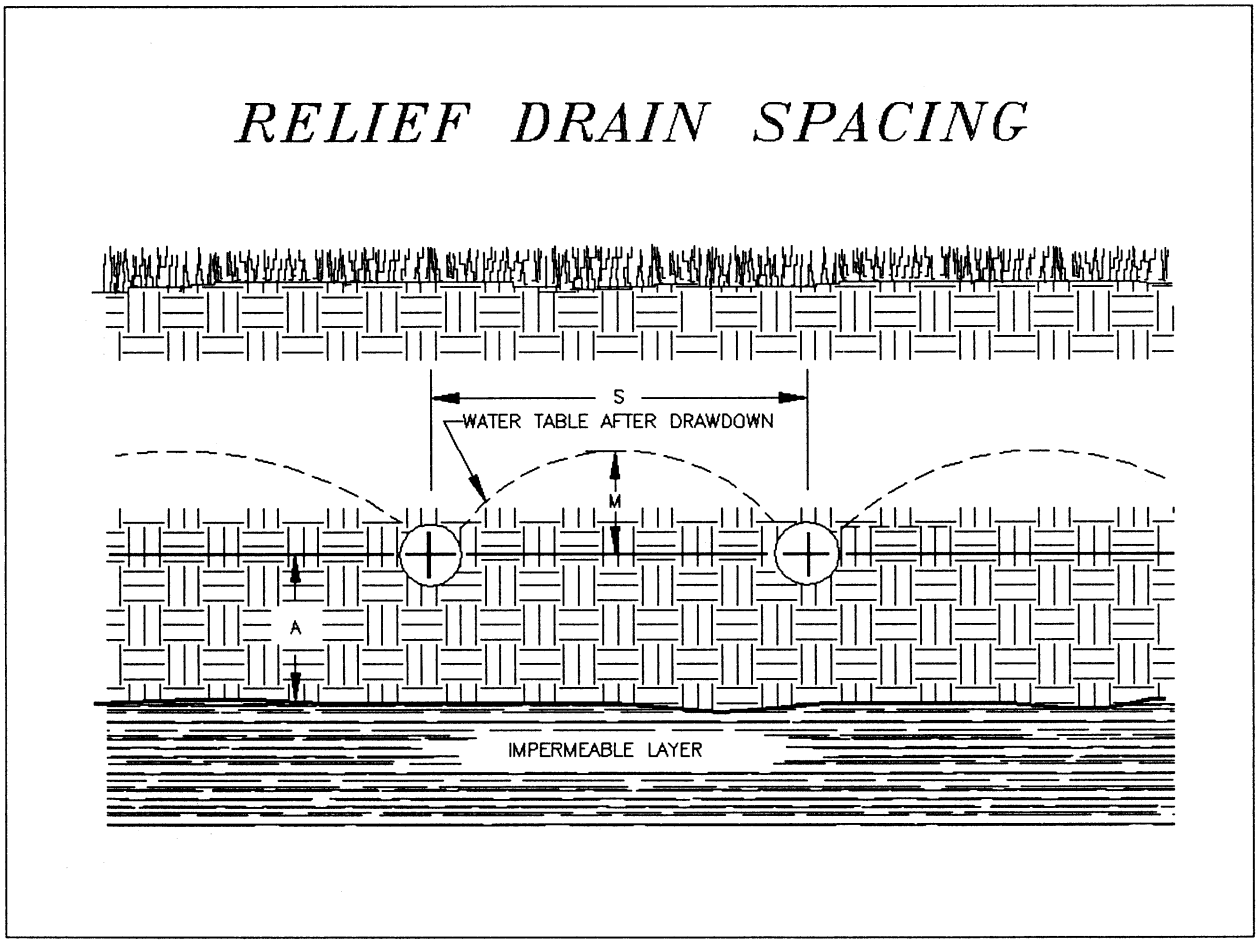
M = vertical distance, after drawdown, of water table above drain at mid-point between lines, feet.

A = depth of barrier below drain, feet.

q = drainage coefficient, rate of water removal, inch/hr.

Also, see Plate 3.28-8.

This equation is applicable to most areas in Virginia. Limitations of the equation are listed in the SCS National Engineering Handbook, Section 16, Drainage of Agricultural Land (66).




Source: USDA-SCS Plate 3.28-8

Spacing of Interceptor Drains

If one interceptor drain is not sufficient, the spacing of multiple drains can be calculated by the following equation:

$$Le = \frac{k\,i}{q}(de - dw + W_2)$$

Where,

Le = the distance downslope from the drain to the point where the water table is at the desired depth after drainage, feet. The second drain should be located at this point.

k = the average hydraulic conductivity of the subsurface profile to the depth of the drain, in./hr.

q = drainage coefficient, rate of water removal, in./hr.

i = the hydraulic gradient of the water table before drainage, feet/foot.

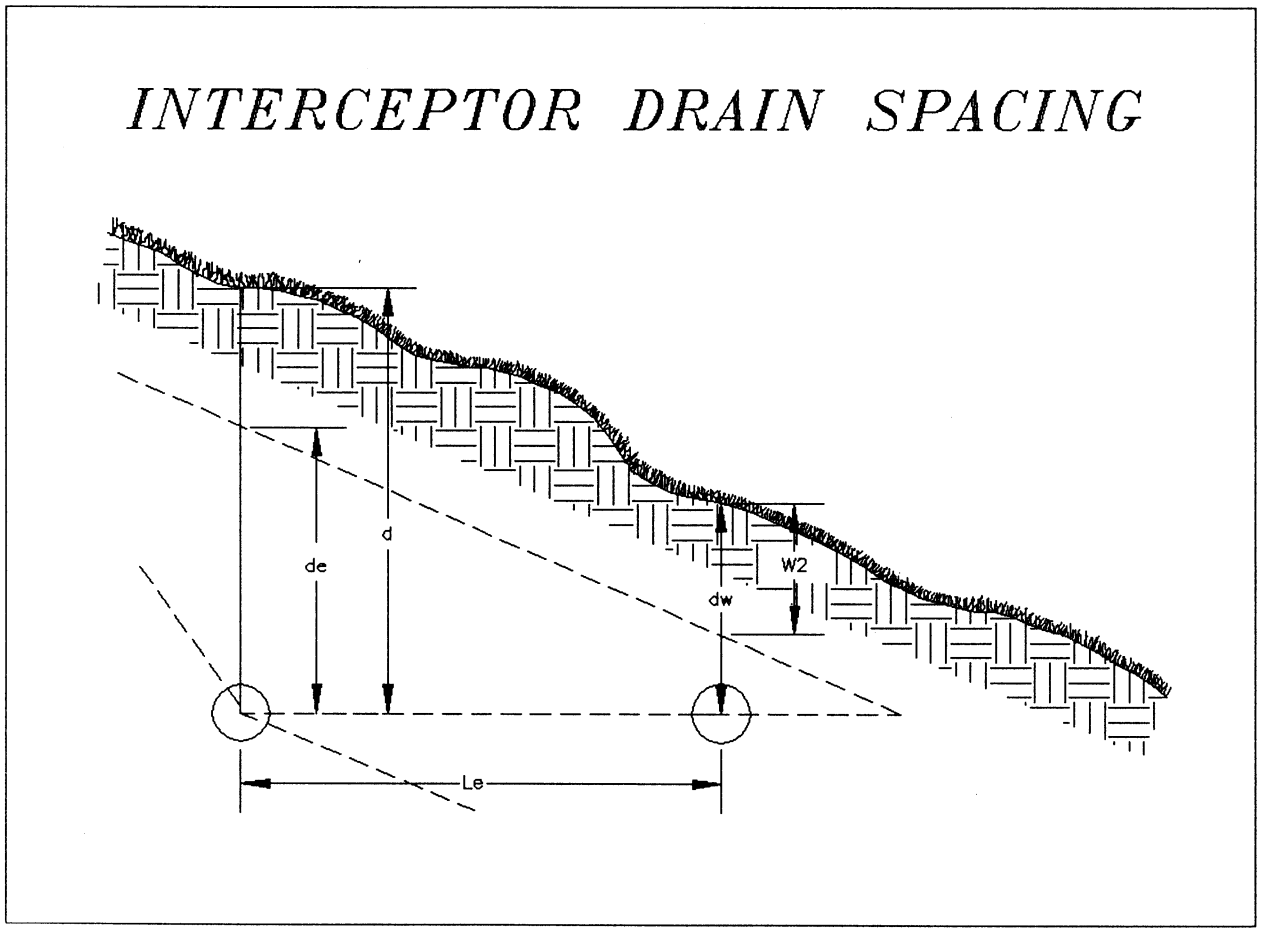
de = the effective depth of the drain, feet.

dw = the desired minimum depth to water table after drainage, feet.

$W_2$ = the distance from the ground surface to the water table, before drainage, at the distance (Le) downslope from the drain, feet.

Also, see Plate 3.28-9.

Further information on the equation can be obtained from the SCS National Engineering Handbook, Section 16, Drainage of Agricultural Land (66).




Source: USDA-SCS

Plate 3.28-9