



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**®

New England District

Stream Crossing

Best Management Practices (BMPs)

Design and construction guidance may be found in the U.S. Forest Service stream simulation manual, “Stream Simulation: An Ecological Approach to Providing Passage for Aquatic Organisms at Road-Stream Crossings,” at www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory.aspx >> “Stream and River Continuity.” Section 5.3.3 Headcutting Potential and 6.2 Design of the Stream-Simulation Channel Bed are particularly relevant. Sections 7.5.2.3 Construction Methods and 8.2.11 Stream-Simulation Bed Material Placement both show important steps in the project construction. Chapter 6.1 is relevant for proper alignment and construction to prevent bank erosion or streambed scour.

Permanent Crossings in Tidal Streams

These are relevant for new and replacement crossings and culvert extensions.

1. Match the velocity, depth, cross-sectional area, and substrate of the existing stream outside the crossing, if it exists, and size crossings such that they do not restrict tidal flow over the full natural tide range seaward of the crossing. The Corps will typically require a low lying property analysis to ensure flooding is not a concern.
2. Construct crossings in dry conditions (GC 17(f) is particularly relevant).

Permanent Crossings in Non-Tidal Streams

These are relevant for new and replacement crossings and culvert extensions.

1. Span¹ streams or size culverts or pipe arches such that they are wider than bankfull width (BFW). Spans are strongly preferred as they avoid or minimize disruption to the streambed, and avoid entire streambed reconstruction and maintenance inside the culvert or pipe arch (see 4, 5 & 7 below), which may be difficult in smaller structures. Footings and abutments for spans and scour protection should be landward of 1.2 times BFW. The width of culverts and arches at bankfull elevation should be ≥ 1.2 times BFW.
2. Embed culverts or pipe arches below the grade of the streambed. This is not required when ledge/bedrock prevents embedment, in which case spans are required. The following depths are recommended to prevent streambed washout, and ensure compliance and long-term success:
 - a. ≥ 2 feet for box culverts and pipe arches², or
 - b. ≥ 2 feet and at least 25% for round pipe culverts².
3. Match the culvert gradient (slope) with the stream channel profile.
4. Construct crossings with a natural bottom substrate within the structure matching the characteristics of the substrate in the natural stream channel and the banks (mobility, slope, stability, confinement, grain and rock size) at the time of construction and over time as the structure has had the opportunity to pass substantial high flow events.
5. Construct crossings with appropriate bed forms and streambed characteristics so that water depths and velocities are comparable to those found in the natural channel at a variety of flows at the time of construction and over time. In order to provide appropriate water depths and

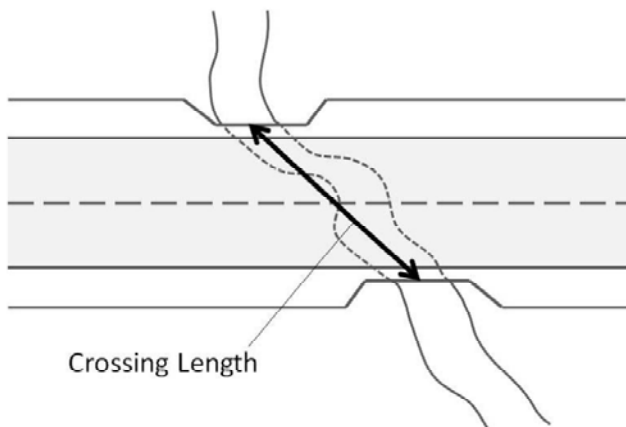
¹ For the purposes of this GP, spans are bridges, three-sided box culverts, open-bottom culverts or arches that span the stream with footings landward of BFW. The use of bridge piers or similar supports does not prevent a structure from being considered as a span.

² For 2(a) and 2(b), deeper embedment depths may be needed if there are elements of the constructed stream bed that are greater than 15 inches in diameter.

velocities at a variety of flows and especially low flows, it is usually necessary to reconstruct the streambed (sometimes including a low flow channel), or replicate or preserve the natural channel within the structure. Otherwise, the width of the structure needed to accommodate higher flows will create conditions that are too shallow at low flows. The grain and rock size, and arrangement of streambed materials within the structure should be in accordance with (4) above. Flows could go subsurface within the structure if only large material is used without smaller material filling the voids.

6. *Openness > 0.82 feet (0.25 meters)*

Openness is the cross-sectional area of a structure opening divided by its crossing length when measured in consistent units (e.g. feet). For a box culvert, openness = (height x width)/ length.



For crossing structures with multiple cells or barrels, openness is calculated separately for each cell or barrel. At least one cell or barrel must meet the appropriate openness standard. The embedded portion of a culvert is not included in the calculation of cross-sectional area for determining openness.³

Openness > 0.82 feet is recommended to make the structure more likely to pass small, riverine wildlife such as turtles, mink, muskrat and otter that may tend to

avoid structures that appear too constricted (see note at the end of this document). This openness standard is too small to accommodate large wildlife such as deer, bear, and moose. Structures that meet this openness standard are much more likely than traditional culverts to pass flood flows and woody debris that would otherwise obstruct water passage. It is likely that most structures that meet all the other general standards will also meet this openness standard. However, for some very long structures it may be impractical or impossible to meet this standard.

7. Banks on each side of the stream inside the crossing matching the horizontal profile of the existing stream and banks outside the crossing are recommended. This will allow terrestrial passage for wildlife and prevent flow from being focused to one side and scouring the bed, especially against the structure's sidewall which may undermine the footings in the case of spans. To prevent failure, all constructed banks should have a height to width ratio of no greater than 1:1.5 (vertical:horizontal) unless the stream is naturally incised. Tie these banks into the up and downstream banks and configure them to be stable during expected high flows.

Temporary Crossings in Non-Tidal Streams

Temporary crossings shall consist of spans, culverts, construction mats or fords designed and constructed as follows:

1. All temporary crossings:

a. Impacts to the streambed or banks require restoration to their original condition (see manual referenced on page 1 of this document for stream simulation restoration methods). Use

³ An Openness Ratio Spreadsheet shows how to calculate the open area for embedded pipe culverts to meet the 0.82 standard for openness. See www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory.aspx >> Stream and River Continuity.

geotextile fabric or other appropriate bedding for stream beds and approaches where practicable to ensure restoration to the original grade. The requirements in GCs 17, 18 and 19 are particularly relevant.

b. Avoid excavating the stream or embedding crossings.

2. Culverts:

a. The water height should be no higher than the top of the culvert's inlet and the culvert is large enough to pass debris.

b. Install energy dissipating devices downstream if necessary to prevent scour.

c. The TOY restrictions in GC 18 and the restrictions in GC 17(f) are particularly relevant.

3. Stream fords:

a. Equipment may ford streams when it is not feasible to construct a span or culvert (e.g., streams having no or low banks, emergency situations); the natural stream bed and banks consist of ledge, rock or sand that prevents disturbance and turbidity; and there is a stable, gradual approach.

b. The TOY restrictions in GC 18 do not apply to stream fords unless the work causes turbidity or sediment resuspension in streams.

4. Spans:

a. Anchor spans where practicable so they do not wash out during high water.

b. A typical span method is provided at www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory.aspx >> Stream and River Continuity >> Skidder Bridge Fact Sheet.

c. The TOY restrictions in GC 18 do not apply to spans unless the work involves discharges of dredged or fill material and causes turbidity or sediment resuspension in streams.

5. Construction mats:

a. Build construction mat stream crossings in accordance with the Construction Mat BMPs, specifically the Wetland/Stream Channel Crossing section. See www.nae.usace.army.mil/missions/regulatory.aspx >> New England General Permits >> Permit Resources.

b. The TOY restrictions in GC 18 do not apply to construction mat stream crossings built in accordance with the Construction Mat BMPs.