



blade or a heavy-duty angle blade to grade the ditches smooth and to shape the road itself. If your subsoil consists of clay and/or gravel, pull that material from the ditch onto the roadbed. On the other hand, if your soil is extremely sandy, you might need to truck in sufficient clay to serve as a binder.

Construct your road with a crowned ridge to force rainwater and snowmelt to drain into the ditch. Contour the road so that it slopes evenly at a rate of about a half-inch per foot from the center to both edges. For instance, if your road is 10 feet wide, the crown should be about 2½ inches higher than the edges.

Install culverts to allow water to move from one side of the road to the other. In more extreme situations, you'll need to call in the experts to build a bridge.

Materials

Once you've completed the grading, cap it with an all-weather surface. Some of the best material for capping an unpaved lane is unwashed, crushed stone that's been screened to about ¾ inch in size. This material includes both angular pieces of rock and plenty of rock dust, pit-run clay and other fine materials that in combination will pack together to form a tight, water- and frost-resistant layer. Source this material at your local gravel pit or rock quarry. The pit salesperson can help determine the volume of material you'll need if you know the length and width of your lane, and how thick you want your crushed-stone cap to be. Ground-up concrete roadway from which any metal has been removed also makes a good cap, but avoid weathered natural stone (such as pea rock)—the rounded surfaces will prevent the material from packing into a solid surface.

If your road is relatively long, have the dump-truck driver spread the crushed stone in a thin layer along its centerline. If your lane is relatively short, have the driver dump the material in one convenient location. In either case, use your box blade or angle blade to pull it toward the edges for an even covering; use your rear blade to grade it smooth. Once your road is capped to your liking, drive your pickup truck back and forth along the road (choosing a slightly different path each time) to pack the stone in place.

Maintenance

Gravity, rapidly moving water and driving on your road work together to erode, create potholes, and push loose stone from the crown to the road's edges. To avoid major road failures, grade it routinely.

If the road was crowned properly, you'll just need to periodically pull the material that moved to the edges back toward the crown. Bryan Welch, a publisher and farmer in Lawrence, Kan., uses his MF 1552 and a 6-foot box blade to maintain his quarter-mile gravel driveway.

With a box blade, says Welch, "I start out by straddling the edges of the drive and cutting down the side-ridge, dragging the loose material to the middle. Then I score the surface with the teeth [of the blade's scarifier] to loosen about an inch of material, which I can use to fill in the potholes and restore the smooth surface of the drive with repeated passes."

The 4WD tractor, says Welch, won't tear up the surface by spinning the back wheels, but the platform is small and nimble enough to maneuver on the narrow drive. "Generally, I can create an almost-perfect driveway in six or eight passes," he says. **FL**

■ For tips on maintaining your road, see go.myFarmLife.com/road. For information on the best road-building implements to outfit your tractor, see go.myFarmLife.com/implements.