

Riparian Buffers:

If every landowner protected or improved one small piece of riparian buffer on their property, these little changes would make a big difference in improving water quality for generations to come!



What are riparian buffers?

Riparian buffers are transition areas between water and land. Buffers can be strips of grassy land leading to the water's edge or thickly forested streamside areas.

What are the benefits of riparian buffers?

Riparian buffers have been found to:

- **Protect and improve water quality** – Stormwater, from rain or melting snow, flows over rooftops, paved areas, soil, lawns and fields before it enters our waterways. As it flows, this runoff collects and transports pollutants such as fertilizers, sediment, pesticides, oil, grease and metals. Riparian buffers trap, absorb and filter these pollutants allowing clean water to slowly soak back into the ground.
- **Preserve floodplains and reduce flooding** – By trapping stormwater runoff, riparian buffers are able to slow down the amount and rate of the water that enters local streams.
- **Protect against erosion** – Because of the complex root system of the plants, grasses and trees stabilizing the buffer area, there is less soil erosion

from stream banks. This means that there will be less sediment pollution in the water and a more attractive looking stream bank.

- **Improve wildlife habitat and biodiversity** – The vegetation in the riparian area is able to provide homes and food for local wildlife. Also, trees in the riparian buffer act as a temperature regulator and shade provider for the fish and amphibians living in the stream.
- **Add aesthetic value** – The vegetation in riparian buffers provides opportunities for recreational activities, makes areas look more attractive and adds to the property value of land.

This project is not for me, but I still want to help. What can I do?

If you choose not to participate in this project, you can still help improve water quality in your community by doing other things. You can make a difference by not mowing up to the edge of the stream bank and allowing the natural vegetation to grow along the bank. Also, planting native species of shrubs, trees, and plants in your yard and along streams gives homes and food to wildlife such as birds. Other things that you can do to make a difference are: joining community tree plantings and stream clean up events, recycling, conserving water, and maintaining your septic system.

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