



Riparian Buffers

Trees, shrubs or grasses planted next to waterways including rivers, streams and drainage ditches filter runoff, improve water quality, protect the soil from erosion and provide wildlife habitat.

Description

Vegetative buffers slow or intercept water flow, trapping sediment and other pollutants such as pesticides and nutrients. Trees and shrubs planted along a waterway also provide wildlife habitat and reduce stream temperatures, providing aquatic benefits.

Benefits

- Buffers prevent contaminants from entering waterways and provide shade, food and habitat for wildlife, fish and other aquatic life.
- Buffers help stabilize streams.

Planning

- Are adequate soil conservation measures installed upslope of the buffer?
- Will fencing be needed to exclude livestock from buffers?
- What types of plants would be suitable for site conditions?
- How wide should the buffer be to meet objectives?

Tech Notes

- Work with a conservationist to select plants for the buffer and determine its width.
- Prepare the site to ensure the survival and growth of selected species.
- Treat any existing or potential weed problems prior to planting. This may require a year to accomplish. Consult with a weed specialist.
- Use tree shelters to increase the survival rate of young trees.
- Follow NRCS specifications.

Maintenance

- Delay mowing grass areas until after August 15 to protect nesting birds.
- Troubleshoot survival problems before replanting; replace dead trees and shrubs as needed.
- Remove tree shelters two years after trees emerge.
- Control weeds and other undesirable vegetative competition.
- Repair fences and check for damage to livestock crossings.