

Best Management Farming Practices for Water Quality Protection

Riparian Forest Buffer (391)

BMP: Protect ditches and banks from concentrated flow and runoff. Detain or filter eroded sediment leaving the operation. Protect creeks, streams and rivers from sediment.

NRCS Practice Standard: Riparian Forest Buffer (391)

A riparian forest buffer is an area of trees and shrubs located adjacent to streams, lakes, ponds, or wetlands. The vegetation extends outward from the water body for a specified distance necessary to provide a minimum level of protection and/or enhancement.



Riparian Forest Buffer (NRCS Conservation Practice Code 391)

Definition: An area predominantly trees and/or shrubs located adjacent to watercourses or water bodies.

Purposes:

- Create shade to lower or maintain water temperatures to improve habitat for aquatic organisms.
- Create or improve riparian habitat
- Reduce excess amounts of sediment, organic materials, nutrients and pesticides in surface runoff.
- Reduce pesticide drift entering the water body.
- Enhance stream bank protection as part of stream bank soil bioengineering practices.
- Restore riparian plant communities.
- Increase carbon storage in plant biomass and soils.

Consider this:

Head cuts and stream bank erosion should be assessed and treated appropriately before establishing the riparian forest buffer.

Make certain channel and stream bank stability is adequate to support this practice.

Select trees and shrubs that are adapted to site and hydrologic conditions and provide diversity preferred by fish and wildlife.

Select native species adapted to area.

Tree and shrub species which may be alternate host to undesirable pests should be avoided.

Specification for each installation shall be based on a thorough field investigation of each site.

Minimum width shall be at least 35 feet measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to the water body beginning at the normal water line, bank-full elevation, or the top of the bank as determined locally.

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