



Why Plant Forest Buffers?

Planting Riparian Forest Buffers is Real Forestry

Forestry Topic FT0013

www.dof.virginia.gov

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Riparian Forest Buffers

Planting riparian forest buffers is real forestry. It is planting trees along waterways and is one of the best ways to protect water quality. Forest buffers also clean the air and enhance wildlife habitat. There are efforts in Virginia to further reduce nutrients in watersheds that are ranked as impaired. The EPA and USDA are focusing cleanup efforts on agricultural activities, water treatment plants, industrial discharge, lawn management and air pollution. Because forest buffers outperform other types of riparian buffers, landowners are being offered state and federal funds to plant conifer forest buffers and hardwood forest buffers.

In Virginia, a forest buffer should be:

- ◆ A minimum width of 35 feet wide;
- ◆ Planted at a minimum density of 110 trees per acre;
- ◆ A selection of species appropriate for the site;
- ◆ Protected from wildlife damage;
- ◆ Checked annually for invasive plant problems, and
- ◆ Maintained at a density level of at least 60 percent through the length of the contract.

Forest Buffer Implementation

When visiting landowners, there will be opportunities for Virginia Department of Forestry foresters to suggest riparian forest buffers as a means to increase income, protect water quality, reduce erosion and create habitat. VDOF foresters are a terrific resource because they are knowledgeable about the benefits to landowners, the watershed and the community.

In Virginia, the VDOF, the Farm Services Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation have teamed up to provide technical assistance to landowners applying for cost-share and land-rental programs.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)

CREP provides the most lucrative funds for planting forest buffers. In the inter-agency relationship, the VDOF county foresters provide the following services for landowners:

- ◆ Draw a plan for the distribution of trees across the selected land parcel;
- ◆ Select tree species that grow best in the variable moisture regimes;
- ◆ Provide assistance in selecting a planter for the planting;
- ◆ Provide the tree density specifications;
- ◆ Advocate for protection of the trees from wildlife damage from deer, voles, mice, beaver and rabbits;
- ◆ Inspect the planting quality after implementation, and
- ◆ Visit the site occasionally to ensure maintenance of the planting.

For More Information

For more information about VDOF services or programs, please contact your local Virginia Department of Forestry office or visit www.dof.virginia.gov.



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