

Name of Practice: Voluntary Forested Riparian Buffer
DCR Specifications for No VFR-3

This document specifies terms and conditions for the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's voluntary forested riparian buffer best management practice, which are applicable to all contracts, entered into with respect to that practice.

A. Description and Purpose

A riparian forest buffer is a permanent area of trees, usually accompanied by shrubs and other vegetation, that is adjacent to a body of water and is managed to maintain the integrity of stream channels and shorelines; to reduce the impact of upland sources of pollution by trapping, filtering and converting sediments, nutrients and other chemicals; to supply food, cover and thermal protection to fish and other wildlife. (From Virginia's Riparian Buffer Implementation Plan; July 1998)

The purpose of this practice is to document and maintain land use change that has occurred within the last 15 years and maintain a riparian forest buffer to provide streambank protection and to control soil erosion, sedimentation, and nutrient loss from surface runoff to improve water quality. This practice will also maintain riparian forest areas to benefit wildlife and aquatic environments.

B. Policies and Specifications

1. This practice will maintain buffer areas as a forested zone along streams for protection and filtering of agricultural non-point source pollution from up gradient agricultural production land.
2. The practice must not be in lifespan from any other conservation program.
3. Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications.
4. The acceptance of prior cost-share assistance for the establishment of the buffer (site preparation, seedlings, labor, etc.) does not render the site ineligible, so long as the lifespan of the establishment practice has expired.
5. This practice is designed to maintain riparian forest buffers adjacent to and buffering cropland and pastureland. Buffer areas that are coming out of an agricultural BMP practice lifespan are eligible. Forestland that has been replanted following timber harvest is not eligible.
6. Flash grazing (allowing livestock to graze the excluded riparian area) is not allowed as a management alternative during the lifespan of this practice. No mowing is allowed in the buffer area.

7. Strip Width - Minimum width of the wooded buffer will be a minimum width of 35 feet from the edge of the stream bank.
8. This practice is subject to the specifications as outlined in "Forestry BMPs for Water Quality in Virginia", and NRCS 391 Riparian Forest Buffer Standard.
9. All practice components implemented should be maintained for a minimum of 5 years following the calendar year of installation. The lifespan begins on Jan. 1 of the calendar year following the calendar year of certification of completion. This practice is subject to spot check by the SWCD throughout the lifespan of the practice.

C. Technical Responsibility

Technical and administrative responsibility is assigned to qualified technical DCR and SWCD staff in consultation, where appropriate and based on the controlling standard, with DCR, Virginia Certified Nutrient Management Planner(s), NRCS, DOF, and VCE . Individuals certifying technical need and technical practice installation shall have appropriate certifications as identified above, and/or Engineering Job Approval Authority (EJAA), for the designed and installed component(s). All practices are subject to spot check procedures and any other quality control measures.

Revised March, 2016