

Water Quality and Wildlife Enhancement Activity – ANM05- Extending Riparian Forest Buffers for Water Quality Protection and Wildlife Habitat



Extend existing buffers

Where existing buffers are utilized, extend them to gain more efficiency in intercepting overland flow and reducing the transport of nutrients, pesticides and agro-chemicals.

Land Use Applicability

This enhancement is applicable on cropland and pasture land.

Benefits

Widening existing conservation buffers (e.g., filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, field borders) that currently meet NRCS conservation practice standard criteria can provide food and cover for native and game species as well as enhancing aquatic habitat by providing shade, input of wood or carbon to the stream, and stabilizing streambank conditions. Additionally,

these extended buffers offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals.

Riparian habitats are important transition zones between terrestrial landscapes and aquatic zones. Wildlife species utilize these transition zones because they provide a unique combination of cover, access to water and often provide important travel corridors. Extending existing buffers not only enhances wildlife habitat but it increases the effectiveness of water quality protection they provide to the streams.

Criteria for Extending Existing Buffers

Existing buffers must meet minimum state requirements for width. Extend the existing buffer for a total of 60 feet or more to enhance habitat and water quality functions.

The extended buffer must be composed of at least 5 species of non-noxious, wildlife friendly grasses, perennial forbs, shrubs, and/or trees best suited to site conditions. Include species that provide pollinator food and habitat where possible.

- All site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice standard criteria and specifications.
- Forested riparian buffers shall consist of a diversity of tree and shrub species of which the majority are capable of producing fruit or nuts and trees which, when mature, will achieve heights of at least 60 feet and 60% canopy closure.
- Any use of the buffer must not compromise its intended purpose.
- To the extent possible the buffer areas and extended buffer areas will be vegetated to increase overland flow interception and increase water quality values of the stream or water body.



For full implementation of this enhancement, continuous buffers must be used on all lands adjacent to streams, lakes and ponds where annual crops are produced.

Operation and Maintenance:

- Once established, buffers must not be mowed, disked, grazed, or otherwise disturbed, until after the primary wildlife ground nesting period has ended.
- Buffers will be regularly maintained for its intended purpose through the life of the contract. This includes any removal of vegetation, including grazing.
- Grazing is allowed if a grazing management plan is used that protects the integrity, diversity and function of the riparian area.
- Buffers will have a wildlife management plan to maintain established plant communities through the life of the contract. The wildlife plan will maintain the plant community and its structural diversity and provide habitat for intended species, remove duff, and control woody vegetation.

Documentation Requirements

1. A map showing the location and size of enhanced riparian forest buffers.
2. Documentation of the type and rates of vegetation planted in the new riparian forest buffers.



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State Criteria

Existing riparian forest buffer to be extended must be 35 feet wide measured outward and perpendicular to the stream from a point at the top of the bank adjacent to the stream. It is not necessary that the entire stream segment under the control of the cooperator be buffered by an existing 35 foot wide buffer. However, only that segment with the existing 35 foot buffer in place is eligible for this enhancement. The riparian forest buffer must be extended so that the total buffer is 60 feet or more wide.

Species planted to extend the riparian forest buffer must contain the following:

A minimum of 5 species of trees, shrubs, grasses and forbs or legumes used in combination to meet the (391) Riparian Forest Buffer standard. Any area planted to filter strip on the outer edge of the buffer must meet the (393) Filter Strip standard. This requires a minimum seeding rate of 40 PLS/ft² for grasses and 60% of the grass mixture shall consist of sod-forming, stiff-stemmed species. Acceptable grass species are located on the “wildlife friendly” plant list (List A) on the Conservation Measurement Tool (CMT)..

- All trees and shrubs used within the riparian forest buffer planting must be native (by Vegetative Zone) and adapted to site conditions.
- Coniferous species are not acceptable to be used.
- One flowering shrub, identified in the pollinator enhancement (PLT01) must be used on the outer edge of all riparian forest buffers.
- At least 50% of the total number of trees and shrubs planted must be species which produce either a fruit or nut.
- The requirement that a majority of trees planted achieve heights of at least 60 feet and 60% canopy closure only applies to Vegetative Zone IV (eastern ¼ of Nebraska) since many species will not reach that height in other parts of the state.

All herbaceous seedings must contain forbs and/or legumes at a seeding rate of 10% to 25% of the grass mixture (4 PLS/ft² to 10 PLS/ft²). Acceptable species are located on the “wildlife friendly” plant list (List A on CMT) OR the list of native forbs to be used with the pollinator enhancement (PLT01).

Document recommended site preparation, planting method, tree/shrub species, seed mixture, seeding rates and other pertinent information on the Grass Seeding Job Sheet (NE-CPA-8) and/or the Tree Planting Job Sheet (NE-CPA-15) and associated attachments.

The following activities are allowed for operation/maintenance and management:

No haying or grazing is allowed within the zone planted to trees and shrubs.

Haying is permitted on filter strip areas which may be planted on the outermost zone up to once per three year period (following establishment) provided it is conducted after July 15th and prior to September 1st.

Grazing is permitted on filter strip areas which may be planted on the outermost zone up to once per three year period (following establishment) provided it is conducted after July 15th and does not exceed a 30 day period during the growing season OR a 60 day period during the dormant season.



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Specific management practices approved by NRCS and intended to improve plant diversity and vigor are allowed (on filter strip areas which may be planted on the outermost zone) but are not required during the CSP contract period. These activities include prescribed burning, tillage and interseeding, and/or site-specific herbicide treatments to accommodate interseeding desired grasses, forbs, or legumes.

Document approved operation/maintenance and management in the table below.

To be completed by NRCS and Producer during planning					To be completed by Producer during certification (if different than planned)	
Tract	Field	Acres	Approved Activity	Allowed Dates	Implemented Activity	Applied Dates
<i>100</i>	<i>2b</i>	<i>1.0</i>	<i>Haying (grass only)</i>	<i>July 15-Sept 1 2013</i>	<i>Grazing (filter strip only)</i>	<i>November 2013</i>

I certify that the extended riparian forest buffer meets these specifications including the following documentation as applicable:

1. Documentation of the O&M or management activity performed – completed table above (if applicable).
2. Completed NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet and associated seed tags, and bills as required.
3. Completed NE-CPA-15 Tree Planting Job Sheet and associated invoices for trees/shrubs, as required.
3. Map with extended riparian forest buffer clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).

Certified by: _____ **Date:** _____