

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM 14 - *Riparian Forest Buffer, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Habitat*



Riparian Forest Buffer – Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Habitat

The activity consists of the managing forested riparian zones to achieve stream side cover and vegetative diversity and structure to improve terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat.

Land Use Applicability

This enhancement is applicable to forested riparian areas on or adjacent to cropland, pasture land, range land and forest land.

Benefits

Targeted conservation measures are implemented to enhance habitat for aquatic species such as fish, turtles, frogs, salamanders, aquatic insects and other species of concern in riparian zones of rivers or streams and their floodplains. These measures include re-location of equipment or forest management activities out of riparian zones and floodplains, and riparian forest stand management to increase tree canopy cover to streams or rivers and standing snags for riparian wildlife.

Criteria for Riparian Forest Buffer – Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Habitat

This enhancement is implemented mainly by managing existing live trees and shrubs. The producer will apply and maintain management actions specifically for improving or protecting natural riparian zones and their functions associated with terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat. These actions include:

- The width of forested riparian zones must be at least 2.5 times the width of the stream channel.
- Manage the riparian area to maintain a diversity of non-invasive tree, shrub, and herbaceous species by techniques such as selective thinning, controlled grazing, managed burning, selective use of herbicides and/or the planting of native species.
- Retain existing snags or create new snags by girdling live trees of at least one/acre.
- Manage the riparian vegetation to provide tree canopy shade of the stream and good stream side cover.
- Do not use heavy equipment such as bull dozers and tractors within the forested riparian zone to implement enhancement activities.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Documentation Requirements for Riparian Forest Buffer – Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Habitat

Following implementation of this activity, the landowner must document:

- Documentation of the management activities in the riparian zone for terrestrial and aquatic wildlife habitat.
- Delineations on a map or aerial photo indicating the stream channel length where the riparian zone has improved habitat.



Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM14 – Riparian Forest Buffer, Terrestrial and Aquatic Wildlife Habitat

State Criteria

Eligible riparian zones include:

Seasonal or Intermittent Streams – must have a defined bed and bank with <2% slope and 30 cumulative days of flow per year causing hydrophytic vegetation in the stream bed OR a scoured, non-vegetated channel. Perennial Streams/Rivers – must have flow throughout the year in most years.

Wetlands – provided that they are either semi-permanently flooded (surface water present throughout the growing season in most years) or wetter AND are located within the floodplain of a stream or river.

General Elements (required for all managed riparian forest buffers):

Width of the forested riparian zone must be a minimum of 35 feet OR 2.5 times the width of the stream/river channel – whichever is greater.

Manage species diversity using one of the two options listed below (or a combination of the two):

- Invasive species will be removed/suppressed as a part of the management plan. These species include: saltcedar, Russian olive, Eastern red cedar, phragmites, purple loosestrife, hybrid cattail, and reed canarygrass. Use of heavy equipment is allowed, as necessary, for the purpose of invasive species control.
- Improve diversity of riparian forest buffer by planting woody or herbaceous species on a minimum of 25% of the buffer using requirements outlined below.

Requirements for plant materials used to improve diversity:

Woody species to be planted to maintain/improve diversity will only consist of native (based on Vegetative Zone) deciduous trees and shrubs which are adapted to the site conditions. Use of coniferous trees is not acceptable with this enhancement. One flowering shrub, identified in the pollinator enhancement (PLT01) must currently exist or be planted within all riparian forest buffers.

Herbaceous seedings will include a minimum of 5 species of grasses and forbs or legumes used in combination to meet the (393) Filter Strip or (390) Riparian Herbaceous Cover standards. 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.

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 OR the list of native forbs to be used with the pollinator enhancement (PLT01).

Projects that require interseeding into existing vegetation will need specifications developed to suppress growth during the period of establishment for seeded species including techniques such as tillage, herbicides, prescribed burning, etc. Site preparation must be documented on the NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet. Seeding rates can be lowered to accommodate existing vegetation that is desired and will be maintained.

Optional Elements (may be used as desired when planned by the cooperator and NRCS planner):

Create snags (standing dead tree) by cutting through cambium layer of undesirable trees. A minimum of three snags should exist per acre of riparian forest buffer. Each snag should be a minimum of six feet tall with two out of three being at least six inches in diameter at “breast height” (4.5 feet above the ground) and the remaining snag being at least ten inches in diameter.



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

NE-ANM14

Create small brush piles and scatter limbs loosely within the riparian forest buffer using downed material and/or removed trees and pruned limbs. Desired brush pile size is approximately five feet tall and 15 feet in diameter. At least one brush pile should exist per acre of riparian forest buffer.

Remove undesirable tree species (i.e. Siberian elm, white mulberry, honelocust, etc.) in order to favor desired tree species (i.e. oaks, cottonwood) or release understory plants (i.e. native shrubs, grasses, and forbs or legumes).

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

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

Haying is permitted on herbaceous areas (“openings” within the riparian forest buffer) 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 larger herbaceous areas 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.

Specific management practices approved by NRCS and intended to improve plant diversity and vigor are allowed on larger herbaceous areas but are not required during the CSP contract period. These activities include prescribed burning, tillage and interseeding, and site-specific herbicide treatments to accommodate interseeding desired grasses, forbs, or legumes.

Documentation Requirements

- Approved invasive species control maintenance/management plan to be conducted within the riparian forest buffer riparian zone (if applicable). This includes species being targeted, timing of activities, herbicides used, application method, environmental considerations (i.e. migratory birds), follow-up evaluation, etc.
- Tree Planting Job Sheet (NE-CPA-15) providing documentation of site preparation, planting method, and composition of species planted to meet requirements (if applicable).
- Grass Seeding Job Sheet (NE-CPA-8) providing documentation of site preparation, seeding method, and composition of species planted or inter-seeded to meet requirements (if applicable).
- Map with riparian forest buffer clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).

I certify that the following information meets specifications and has been provided to NRCS:

1. Site-specific maintenance/management plan (attached to this document) for invasive species control and associated invoices, receipts for implementation of the plan, as required.
2. Written documentation consisting of a completed NE-CPA-15 Tree Planting Job Sheet and associated invoices, as required.
3. Written documentation consisting of a completed NE-CPA-8 Grass Seeding Job Sheet and associated seed tags, copies of dated receipts, as required.
4. Map with riparian forest buffer clearly identified (highlighted, outlined, etc.).

Certified by: _____ **Date:** _____