United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Water Quality and Wildlife Enhancement Activity –*ANM06- Extending Existing Riparian Herbaceous Cover for Water Quality Protection and Wildlife Habitat*

Extend existing Herbaceous Riparian 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 herbaceous buffers 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 carbon to the stream, and stabilizing streambank conditions. Additionally, these extended buffers offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals.

Riparian herbaceous 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 Riparian Herbaceous 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 and/or perennial forbs 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.
- Herbaceous riparian buffers shall consist of a diversity of plant species of which the majority are capable of producing nutritious food sources to wildlife.
- Any use of the herbaceous 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 (herbaceous or forested) 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 not permitted unless a grazing management plan is in effect.
- 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.
- Grazing is not permitted unless a grazing management plan is in effect that maintains the buffer's intended purpose.

Documentation Requirements

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

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NH State Supplement
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Criteria

For Extending Herbaceous Riparian Buffers:

The minimum width for existing riparian buffers is 35 feet.

Do not plant Reed Canary Grass. The following mixes are acceptable mix for this enhancement. Other mixes including warm season grasses and perennial flowering plants for pollinators are acceptable. Note: some plantings for pollinators can be toxic to livestock, for more information refer to the Northeast Pollinator Technical Note or the USDA Plants Database.

For moderately well and well drained sites recommended species include:

Species	lbs/ac of seed
Orchardgrass	10
Smooth Bromegrass	5
Medium Red Clover	5
Timothy	5
Redtop	5

For somewhat and poorly drained sites recommended species include:

Species	lbs/ac of seed
Orchardgrass	7
Redtop	5
Red Clover	5
Kentucky Bluegrass	7
Perennial ryegrass	5
Ladino clover	1

For sandy excessively-well drained sites recommended species include:

Species	lbs/ac of seed
Big Blue Stem	3
Little Blue Stem	5
Sand Love Grass	4
Creeping Red Fescue	5
Virginia Wild Rye	5
Red Top	5