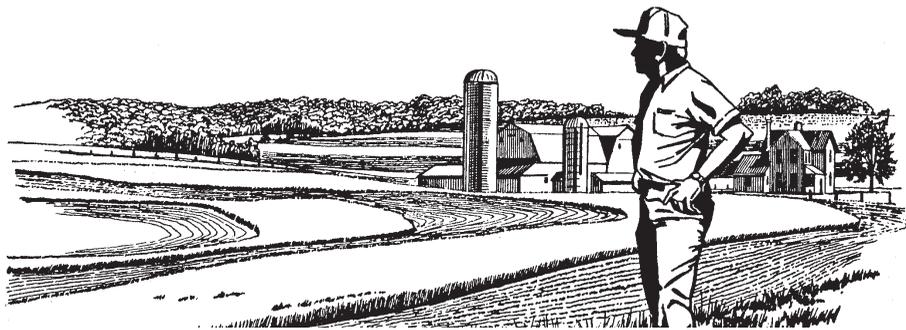


Buffers designed to protect water, reduce erosion on land and provide protection



There are many different types of buffers. While these practices may be called different names in different regions of the country, their functions are much the same — improve and protect ground water and surface water quality; reduce erosion on cropland and stream bank; and provide protection and cover for livestock, wildlife and fish.

Shelterbelts/Field Windbreaks

A row or rows of trees, shrubs, or other plants used to reduce wind erosion, protect young crops and control blowing snow. Shelterbelts also provide excellent protection from the elements for wildlife, livestock, houses and farm buildings. Field windbreaks are similar to shelterbelts but are located along crop field borders or within the field itself. They may also be called hedgerow plantings in some areas.

Living Snow Fences

Similar in design to field windbreaks/shelterbelts, living snow fences serve the additional

function of being used to help manage snow deposits to protect buildings, roads and other property. They can be designed and placed to help protect nearby areas for livestock, provide wildlife cover, and collect snow to enhance soil moisture and nearby water supplies.

Contour Grass Strips

Narrow bands of perennial vegetation established across the slope of a crop field and alternated down the slope with strips of crops. Properly designed and maintained contour grass strips can reduce soil erosion, minimize transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants, and provide wildlife habitat.

Riparian Buffers

Streamside plantings of trees, shrubs and grasses that can intercept contaminants from both surface water and ground water before they reach a stream and that help restore damaged streams.

Filter Strips

store it in plant material.

- Up to 60% of pathogens removed from runoff.
- Provides a source of food, nesting cover and shelter for wildlife.
- Improves fish habitat.

Other Benefits

- Reduces wind erosion.
- Slows water runoff
- Reduces downstream flooding
- Stabilizes stream banks
- Establishment of natural vegetation
- Adds visual aesthetics to the landscape
- Improves air quality

Greater Profits

- Often provides income from local, state and federal programs
- Provides tax incentives
- Reduces crop losses from flooding
- Protects soil in vulnerable areas

Strips of grass used to intercept or trap field sediment, organics, pesticides and other potential pollutants before they reach a body of water.

Grassed waterways

Strips of grass seeded in areas of cropland where water concentrates or flows off a field. While they are primarily used to prevent gully erosion, waterways can be combined with filter strips to trap contaminants or field sediment.

Salt-Tolerant Vegetation

Special areas planted to vegetation capable of growing in high-saline environments and capable of reducing saline seepage.

Cross-Wind Trap Strips

Rows of perennial vegetation planted in varying widths and orientated perpendicular to the prevailing wind direction. Cross-wind trap strips can effectively prevent wind erosion in cropping areas with high annual wind speeds.

Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife

Areas of shallow water within or near cropland that are protected by permanent shrubs, trees and grassed areas. These areas are vital to enhancing wildlife habitat.

Wellhead Protection Areas

Land within a maximum 2,000-foot radius from a public well, as designated by the Environmental Protection Agency or a state-designated agency, can be enrolled in the continuous CRP sign-up. Circular-shaped areas can be “squared off” to eliminate odd-shaped corners to a maximum of 367 acres.

Other types of buffers include:

- Field Borders — Grass-seeded areas along the edges or ends of cropland
- Alley Cropping — Crops planted between rows of larger mature trees
- Herbaceous Wind Barriers — Perennial vegetation established in rows across the prevailing wind direction.
- Vegetative barriers — Narrow, permanent strips of dense, tall, stiff, erect perennial vegetation established parallel and perpendicular to the dominant slope of the field.
- Streambank Plantings — Plants, shrubs and/or trees placed to protect streambanks.

Buffers protect your land

Conservation buffers are a common-sense way for you to protect your most valuable asset — your land — and demonstrate your personal commitment to conservation.

What's more, the continuous Conservation Reserve Program sign-up makes use of conservation buffers economically attractive.

You can sign up any day at your local Department of Agriculture Service Center, without having to make a competitive offer as required during the general CRP sign-up. Your offer will automatically be accepted if all eligibility requirements are met.

Best described as strips or small areas of land in permanent vegetation, conservation buffers help control potential pollutants and manage other environmental concerns. Filter strips, field borders, grassed waterways, field breaks, shelterbelts, contour grass strips and riparian (stream-side) buffers are all examples of conservation buffers.

Conservation buffers can be especially helpful to you in maintaining a productive, profitable, and responsible farming or ranching operation. America's farms and ranches today produce more than crops and livestock. They also produce environmental benefits, and conservation buffers can help you protect soil, air and water quality; improve fish and wildlife habitat; and demonstrate a commitment to land stewardship.

Conservation buffers can be used along streams and around lakes or wetlands. They can also be installed at field edges or within fields. Buffers are most effective, of course, if they are planned as part of a comprehensive conservation system.

To maximize their effectiveness and your overall conservation program, buffers should be combined with other proven conservation practices, such as conservation tillage, nutrient management and integrated pest management. Working together, these practices will provide you with an effective yet profitable conservation program.

Buffers — What are they?

Conservation buffers are small areas or strips of land in vegetation, designed to slow water runoff, provide shelter and stabilize riparian areas. Strategically placed in the agriculture landscape, buffers can effectively mitigate the movement of sediment, nutrients, and pesticides within farm fields. Buffers include: contour buffer strips, field borders, filler strips, windbreaks and wetlands. A small amount of land in buffers can assist producers in meeting both economic and environmental goals.

Cleaner Water

- Located in environmentally sensitive areas, buffers provide another line of defense to filter water — both surface and shallow ground water — before it enters streams and lakes.
- Can reduce up to 80% of sediment.
- Reduces 49% (on average) of phosphorus.
- Removes a significant amount of nitrate;

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