

Understanding Buffer Rules on Your Property

What Are Riparian Buffers?

The word riparian refers to the banks of streams, rivers, lakes, estuaries or other waters. A healthy riparian buffer has a combination of woody vegetation, shrubs, herbs, and native grasses growing on it to keep streambanks in place, remove unwanted pollutants, create healthy critter habitat, and reduce flooding.

Riparian buffers are managed as one or more zones. The zone closest to the water protects the streambank and shoreline from erosion. The outer zone slows and spreads out the flow of stormwater, and traps pollutants before they enter the body of water.

Do You Have Buffers on Your Property?

If you are unsure if you have protected buffers on your property, check the Applicability section of the specific Rule. List of the buffer rules:

deq.nc.gov/ncbufferrules

See the mapping resources on the DWR main Buffer Rules page:

deq.nc.gov/ncbufferrulesprogram

Contact your Local Government or the NC Division of Water Resources:

deq.nc.gov/ncbufferrulescontacts

Washington, Raleigh, Winston-Salem, Morresville, Asheville, Wilmington and Fayetteville

To learn more about buffers, and for additional educational and training resources, visit:

deq.nc.gov/bufferrules



Benefits of Riparian Buffers



PROVIDE PROTECTION

- Remove nutrients
- Filter sediment
- Trap pollutants
- Reduce erosion
- Slow velocity of runoff, allow infiltration
- Reduce economic loss from floods



PROVIDE HABITAT

- Home to plant & animal species
- Shade- thermal protection of stream
- Provide large woody and leaf debris (instream habitat and food)



PROVIDE AESTHETIC VALUE

- Absorb noise from waterfront activities
- Provide privacy
- Provide recreational value such as fishing and birdwatching



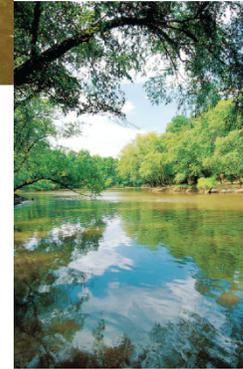
Division of Water Resources Buffer Permitting Branch

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NORTH CAROLINA

Riparian Buffer Rules

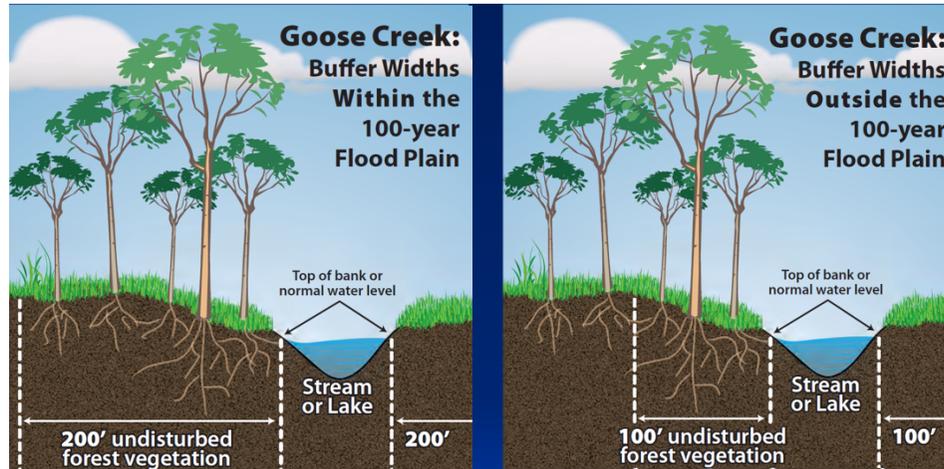
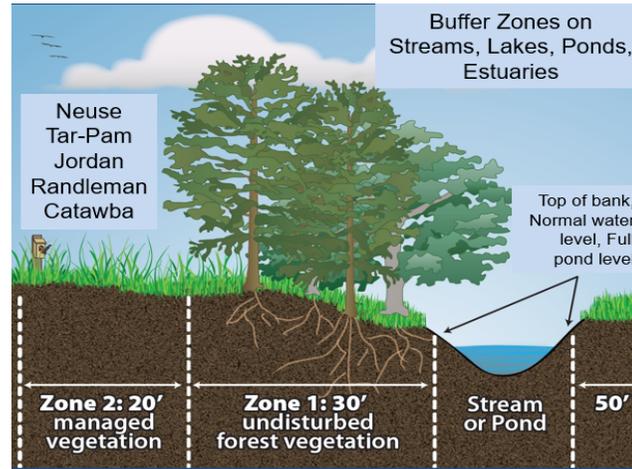


Where do the buffer rules apply and why?

- **Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, Jordan, Randleman**
 - Nutrient or pollutant removal to protect lakes and coastal waters
 - Use Natural Resource Conservation Service or a 1:24,000 scale USGS topographic map or the most recent NRCS Soil Survey manuscript
- **Randleman**
 - Protect water supply
 - On above maps and where site specific evidence indicates the presence of waters
- **Catawba**
 - Mainstem Catawba River and lakes including Lake James
 - Nutrient or pollutant removal to protect lakes
- **Goose Creek**
 - Sustain and recover federally endangered carolina heelsplitter
 - Use above USGS or NRCS maps

For map guidance contact your local government or visit: deq.nc.gov/ncbufferrules

How wide is the buffer?



Common Activities in the Buffer

Regulated activities in the Buffers are listed in the Table of Uses for Each Rule: deq.nc.gov/ncbufferrules

Please read and understand the rule including the table of uses prior to beginning any activity within the buffer. Activities may be deemed allowable, require written approval, or prohibited.

EXAMPLES OF SOME ACTIVITIES LISTED IN THE TABLE OF USES OF THE RULES



Fences, if no woody vegetation is removed



Fertilizing, only to establish replanted vegetation. Ongoing fertilization is not allowed.



Playground Equipment



Removal of poison ivy or sumac and other invasive plants as listed in a specific document



Periodic mowing in Zone 2



Planting Native vegetation to enhance the buffer



Removal of trees that are in danger of causing damage to structures or human life



Limited pruning of forest vegetation
See Pruning definition: 15A NCAC 02B .0610 (33)

Riparian Buffer Protection Programs

