It Pays to Install a Conservation Buffer

Your farm can benefit.

Your local Soil and Water Conservation District can help you qualify for funds that decrease the cost of installing conservation buffers on your farm. In addition, buffers also can benefit your bottom line by:

- Removing poorly drained land from cultivation.
- Reducing soil loss from wind and water erosion.
- Squaring off oddly shaped fields that are hard to work efficiently.
- Providing a long-term soil rental income.
- Establishing timber for future harvest.
- Leading to better herd health and weight gain when used with stream exclusion practices.

Money comes from the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program, which is carried out by conservation districts and administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

How and where they work.

Installing a forest or grass buffer between bodies of water and adjoining agricultural operations improves water quality by filtering — even treating — pollutants and by reducing soil erosion and sediment delivery. Buffers are particularly cost-effective when they are matched to your farm's site-specific needs. Some places to consider locating a buffer for both conservation and production benefits include:

- Seasonal wetlands and the borders of intermittent waterways.
- Eroding creek, stream and river banks.
- Streamside pastures, in combination with stream exclusion practices.

Here's the payoff.

In State Program Year 2021, the Virginia Cost-Share reimbursement rate is:

Up to 95% plus:

- Up to $150/acre for conifer buffers.
- Up to $250/acre for hardwood. *These buffers are defined as trees, shrubs, herbaceous plantings and groundcover planted from the edge of a stream bank to a width of at least 35 feet but not more than 100 feet.*

75% up to a maximum of:

- $100/acre for grass filter strips. *These buffers are defined as permanent vegetative cover planted on cropland within 100 feet of a live or intermittent waterway and designed to filter sheet flow.*

Other financial incentives from state and federal partners have increased in recent years. These include soil rental, buffer rentals through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and more. Farmers and landowners can experience net economic gains over the life of a buffer practice when they take advantage of all applicable programs.

Take the next step.

Conservation begins with your local Soil and Water Conservation District, which can help you apply for many different cost-share funding programs to help you implement conservation buffer best management practices. District staff also can identify other conservation programs for which you might qualify.

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Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation

VIRGINIA'S SWCD
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