Forested Stream Buffers

BLUE MOUNTAIN—
KITTATINNY RIDGE
CONSERVATION
PROJECT

The Kittatinny Ridge (also known as Blue Mountain) contains the headwaters of numerous streams that provide drinking water and recreation to millions who live within an hour's drive of the ridge. One of the most effective ways to protect the quality of this water is to maintain or establish forested buffers along streams on the Ridge and in the valleys.

Stream buffers consist of trees, shrubs, and flowering plants. These buffers are typically at least 25 feet wide on each side of the stream and offer a wide array of benefits, including enhanced water quality, wildlife habitat, and flood control.

TOP 5 REASONS TO PLANT STREAM BUFFERS

1. Improve water quality by removing pollutants
2. Replenish groundwater
3. Reduce flooding
4. Increase property values
5. Provide wildlife habitat

Who?
All landowners with stream front property, including small headwaters and intermittent streams (streams that are dry during part of the year). Adding forested stream buffers can make an impact even on small properties.

Why?
Water quality is positively affected by trees along streams. They keep pollutants from reaching the stream and multiply the stream's ability to remove pollutants that do reach it. They keep soil where it belongs to keep water clean, reduce bank erosion and flooding.

Tree cover helps build efficient in-stream processes through providing cooler temperatures, woody debris, and gravel bars. This provides an ideal habitat for stream invertebrates which are critical in reducing in-stream pollution. Also, these micro-invertebrates feed countless fish, bird and amphibian species and provide the base of a healthy ecosystem. Forested stream buffers can also provide habitat corridors for wildlife and are used extensively by migrating songbirds.

Audubon
PENNSYLVANIA

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RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION:

There are a number of resources in place to assist property owners through the process of creating a Forested Stream Buffer.

USDA's Conservation Resource Enhancement Program
800-941-2737

Stroud Water Research Center
www.stroudcenter.org

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, native plant resources
www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/wildplant/native.aspx

Native trees of PA
http://www.patrees.org/native-trees-vs-invasive-plants

Audubon PENNSYLVANIA

How?
If you already have forest established along your stream, simply keep it intact. You may consider removing some of the non-native invasive species in your forest and replacing them with native plants.

Every new stream buffer should be carefully planned. Among your considerations should be:

- Does my property qualify for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program? See the box below for more details.
- What was prior land use? How does the soil on your property drain? This may impact your tree species selections.
- Do you have lawn grasses currently growing along stream bank? This can create root competition with the saplings and provide habitat for voles which are destructive to young trees. Management with mowing and herbicide would be necessary.
- Are there any trees nearby that could naturally provide seeds to re-generate the forest? If so, you may not need to re-plant all of your targeted areas
- Are deer common on the property? You will need to protect your plantings with tree tubes or fencing.

YOU CAN GET PAID TO PLANT A STREAM BUFFER!

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) will provide cost-share assistance in establishing a buffer, and - in some cases - an annual lease payment. The program is administered by the USDA and is available in nearly every county in Pennsylvania.

- Most land within 180 feet of streams, ponds and open water wetlands can qualify if it has less than 30% coverage by trees or shrubs.
- The land does not need to be in agricultural use.
- Small streams and intermittent streams that are dry during part of the year are eligible
- Call the CREP information line toll free at **1-800-941-2737** for more details.

A few more tips for the planning process:

- Wider is better. While 25 feet of buffer on each side of a stream will provide many benefits, increasing the width to 50 or 100 feet is even better. At these widths buffers become more useful to wildlife.
- Make wise tree and shrub species selections. Choose species that will thrive in your region and the moisture, soil, and light conditions on your property.
- Choose a diversity of tree species. By planting several species you decrease the risk of pests or diseases harming your plantings.
- Plan the spacing of the trees and shrubs, and learn about post-planting protection and maintenance.