



# BLAIR COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

[www.blairconservationdistrict.org](http://www.blairconservationdistrict.org)

1407 Blair Street • Hollidaysburg, PA 16648 • (814) 696-0877 Ext. 5 • Fax (814) 696-9981



**BLAIR COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
RIPARIAN BUFFER INCENTIVE PROGRAM APPLICATION – 2024  
(Please return to Conservation District by March 1<sup>st</sup>)  
(1407 Blair St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648 - 814-696-0877 x 5  
[cweyant@blairconservationdistrict.org](mailto:cweyant@blairconservationdistrict.org))**

The Blair County Conservation District's Riparian Buffer incentive program is currently accepting applications for those interested in planting new riparian buffers in Blair County. This program is open to any landowner both in rural and urban locations, however you must have a minimum buffer length of 100 feet to be given consideration. If applying for an agricultural location, buffers must be a minimum of 35 feet in width, however, a residential location could consider a narrow buffer with a minimum width of 15 feet. Projects that exceed the minimum width will receive additional points during application evaluations. Landowners of recreational properties are asked to contact the Conservation District prior to filing out an application to discuss project plans. Please note a landowner cannot receive funding if you are already receiving funds from another riparian buffer program for the same project area.

**Funding:** Payments will be paid on a per acre basis, with up to \$6,000 per acre and \$1,000 for maintenance during the first year depending on program interest. A minimum all-inclusive payment of \$1000 will be issued to properties with a project area under 0.25 acres. Currently, funding is only available for this year, and it is unknown if there will be more funds available to continue this program into the upcoming years. The funds can be used to cover the costs of labor, site preparation (to include invasive species removal), and planting materials such as trees, shrubs, fertilizer, seed, tree tubes, and stakes. Native plants must be used for this program.

**Application:**

1. Contact information
2. Project location (latitude and longitude)
3. Watershed and stream name where project is located
4. Streambank height and severity of erosion (if present)
5. Invasive species information (if present)
6. Estimated cost of project
7. Brief description of the project
8. Plan map that delineates project area and shows proposed practices
9. Pictures of existing conditions which include but are not limited to: intended planting area, streambank, and views both upstream and downstream.

**Project Timeline:** Applications are due to the Conservation District by March 1<sup>st</sup>. Planting must occur this April/May (April 1, 2024, to May 31, 2024) for this round of funding. If planting cannot be implemented by May 31, 2024, a formal Time Extension Request may be submitted to the Conservation District seeking District Board Approval, allowing for buffer implementation in Fall 2024 (September 22, 2024, to October 31, 2024). Requests must be submitted by June 3, 2024.

**Funding Allocation:** The Conservation District staff will need to visit the site upon completion to verify the establishment of the riparian buffer planting. Once this verification is made, the District will then issue payment. Routine visits may be made yearly by the District to ensure proper upkeep throughout the lifespan of the buffer.



**- Resource Conservation Since 1966 -**



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*\*\*Please attach maps that show the project area and include pictures of the existing site conditions. See program guidelines for more information. \*\**

**Applicant Contact Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell #: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

**Watershed (if known):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Stream Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Height of Streambank (ft.):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Streambank Erosion Present:** Yes  No

**Severity of Erosion Throughout Project Area:**

<20%     20-40%     40%-60%     >60%

**Existing Land Use:** Residential  Cropland  Pasture  Recreational

**Project Area:** Width \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_

**Latitude:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Longitude:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Type of Buffer:** Grass/Meadow  Narrow Grass/Meadow  Forest  Narrow Forest

*\*Lifespan of buffers range from 5 years for grass/meadow and 10 years for forest (trees and shrubs)*

**Is there currently a presence of invasive species?** Yes  No

Please list the type/name of invasive species present (if known): \_\_\_\_\_

Population of invasive species throughout project area:  
(Please select the percent range that best represents the project area):

<10%     10%-20%     20%-30%     30%-40%     >40%

Are you interested in streambank fencing associated with a buffer? Yes  No

*(This is for Agricultural Properties ONLY)*



# BLAIR COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT RIPARIAN BUFFER INCENTIVE PROGRAM – 2024 INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

## What is a Riparian Buffer?

A riparian buffer is an area adjacent to a stream, lake, or wetland that contains a combination of trees, shrubs, and/or other perennial plants and is managed differently from the surrounding landscape. The main reason for using a riparian buffer is to provide conservation benefits, such as pollution reduction, erosion control, flood protection and wildlife value. Broadly, riparian buffers can be classified into two major categories: grass buffers, which contain non-woody plants like grasses and wildflowers, and forested buffers, which contain woody plants like trees and shrubs. Riparian buffers are important components of a healthy stream ecosystem and establishing them along waterways can make the transition from land to water a healthy one.

## Different Types of Buffers

Forest Buffer: Linear wooded areas that help filter nutrients, sediments and other pollutants from runoff as well as remove nutrients from groundwater. The recommended buffer width is 100 feet, with a 35 feet minimum width required.

Forest Buffer – Narrow: Linear strips of wooded areas maintained on land that lies between the edge of an agricultural field, yard, etc. and streams, rivers, or tidal waters that help filter nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants from runoff. Narrow forest buffer strips are between 15 and 35 feet in width.

Grass Buffer: Linear strips of grass or other non-woody vegetation maintained to help filter nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants from runoff. The recommended buffer width for buffers is 100 feet, with a 35 feet minimum width required. Grass buffers must be maintained at a height of at least 8 inches.

Grass Buffer – Narrow: Linear strips of grass or other non-woody vegetation maintained on land that lies between the edge of an agricultural field, yard, etc. and streams, rivers, or tidal waters that help filter nutrients, sediment, and other pollutants from runoff. Narrow grass buffers are between 15 and 35 feet in width. Grass buffers must be maintained at a height of at least 8 inches.

*\*Any buffer less than 35 feet in (average) width is only eligible for the narrow buffer practices.*

*\* When buffers are implemented along a pasture, streambank fencing should be installed to prevent livestock from disrupting the buffer by grazing and trampling and to keep them from entering the stream.*

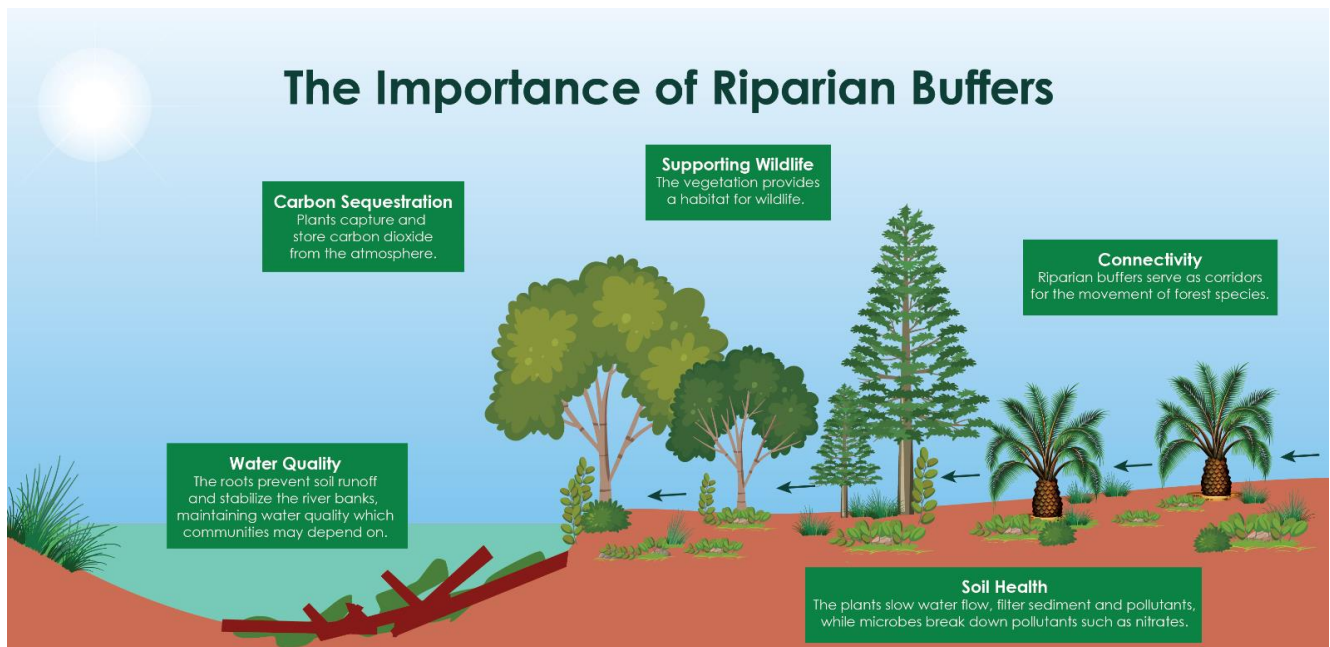
## Reasons to Plant a Buffer

Pollution Reduction: Excessive amounts of pesticides, fertilizers, and animal wastes from farms, yards, and roadways can seriously disrupt an aquatic system. Fertilizers that make a lawn green and lush and make corn grow also encourage high levels of plants and algae in a stream, which depletes oxygen levels. A buffer acts as natural filter to decrease the amount of these pollutants before they can reach the water.

**Erosion Control:** Runoff from agricultural fields, lawns, and roads is deposited in the buffer rather than being allowed to enter the water. Trees and shrubs along a stream bank help to keep moving water from eroding the bank, further reducing sedimentation rates.

**Flood Protection:** During flood events, riparian buffers can slow runoff and absorb excess water. This reduces peak flows and can lessen downstream flooding.

**Wildlife Value:** Riparian buffers provides food, shelter, water, and breeding sites for birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles. Fish depend greatly on a good aquatic habitat, and a stream without a riparian buffer is not likely to support healthy fish populations. Too much fine sediment caused by erosion and runoff can be especially damaging to fish by clogging their gills and smothering spawning sites for both fish and aquatic insects. A lack of trees along the riparian zone can cause higher water temperatures, which may ultimately deplete oxygen levels in the water.



When thinking about planting a riparian buffer on your property take the information above into consideration. Buffers, when executed correctly, are a great way to help support and improve the water quality and aquatic habitat in Pennsylvania. For additional information on riparian buffers, designing a buffer, and buffer maintenance please visit the Blair County Conservation District's YouTube Channel [here](#) to view educational videos (*Riparian Buffer Webinar Series*).

All landowners are welcome to apply to the 2024 Riparian Buffer Incentive Program. You may access the application online at [www.blairconservationdistrict.org](http://www.blairconservationdistrict.org) .

**Please contact the Blair County Conservation District at 814-696-0877 x 5 if you have additional questions.**

