

# RIPARIAN BUFFERS

benefits for water, wildlife and people

## 1 WHAT ARE RIPARIAN BUFFERS?

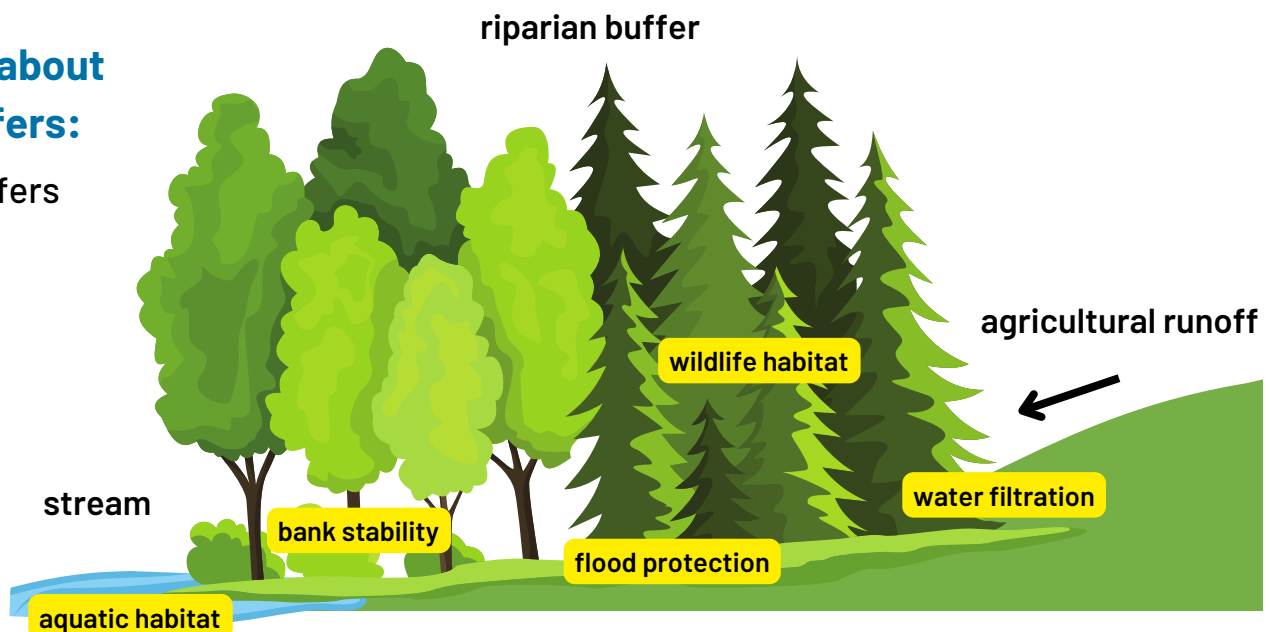
Riparian buffers are vegetated or forested transitional zones between land and water resources, such as streams, rivers, lakes, ponds or wetlands. The effectiveness of riparian buffers can vary on a number of factors, like type of vegetation, width, slope, size of the stream and soil type. Forested buffers are the most effective at protecting and/or enhancing water quality.

## 2 WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

- Filter nutrients, pesticides and animal waste from agricultural land
- Stabilize eroding banks
- Filter sediment from runoff
- Provide shade, shelter, and food for fish and other aquatic organisms
- Provide wildlife habitat and corridors for terrestrial organisms
- Protect cropland and downstream communities from flood damage
- Provide space for recreation (fishing, birding, hiking, canoeing, etc.)

Learn more about  
riparian buffers:

[pecva.org/buffers](http://pecva.org/buffers)



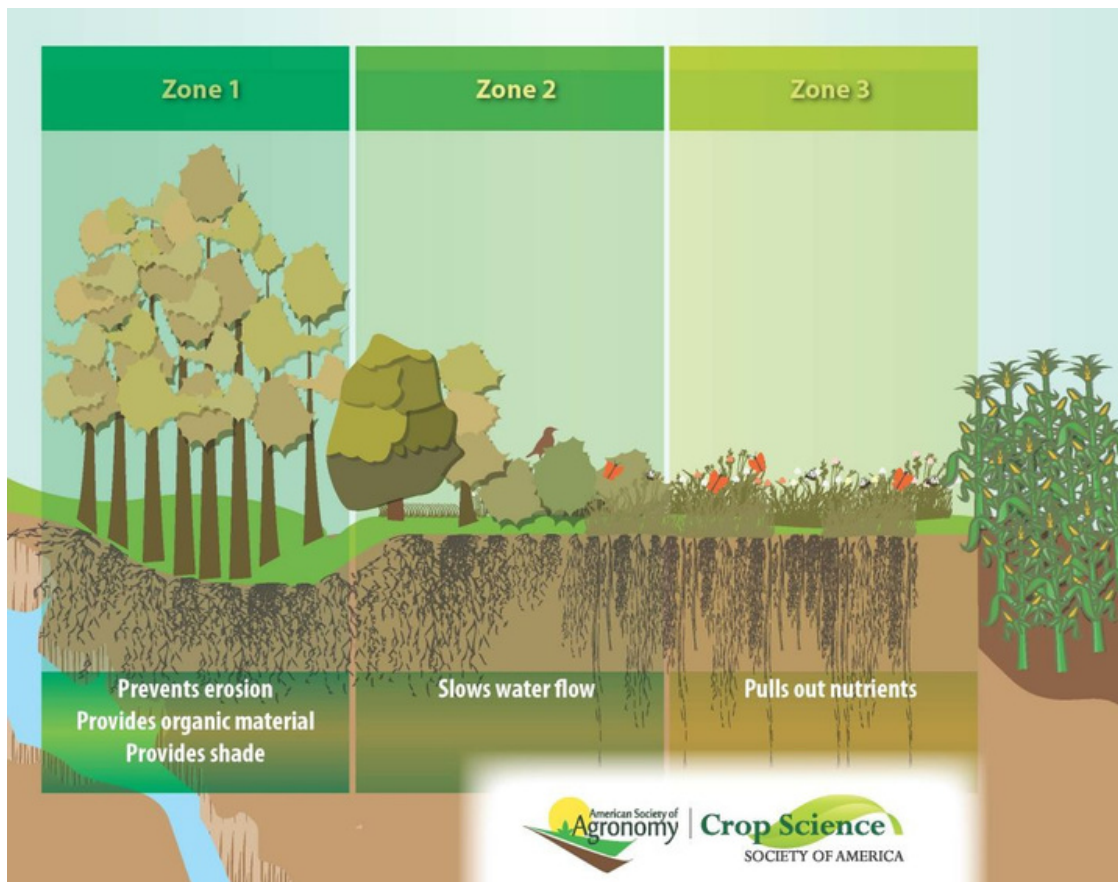
# 3 SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

An effective riparian buffer will be at least 35 ft in width (a 100 ft buffer can generally filter >60% of pollutants) and include three zones of vegetation, particularly under conditions of steep slopes, erosion and intensive land use.

**Zone 1 (streamside) - undisturbed mature forest stabilizes the stream bank**

**Zone 2 (middle zone) - trees and shrubs slow runoff and catch sediment**

**Zone 3 (outer zone) - vegetated (e.g. perennial plants, unmowed grasses) or wooded; serves as the margin between the rest of the buffer and land actively used**



# 4 GETTING STARTED

Federal, state and local cost-share programs are often available to help landowners offset the costs of establishing riparian buffers and other best management practices on their properties.

**Find cost-share programs:**

[bit.ly/costsharefunds](http://bit.ly/costsharefunds)

