



Conservation Buffers work...


...for you

...and for your environment

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1993 Report

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- buffers greatly underused as conservation practice
 - urged widespread use by farmers, ranchers, and other landowners
 - buffers can solve a whole range of soil, water, air, and wildlife conservation problems

USDA creates


National Conservation Buffer Initiative



Initiative purposes:

- **Encourage use of buffers by agricultural producers and others**
- **Make landowners aware of USDA cost-share and related programs**

The Goal



To help farmers, ranchers, and other landowners install 2 million miles of conservation buffers.

GOAL Update




As of June 30, 2003

We have completed over 1.4 million miles

Which is over 5.1 million acres of
Conservation Buffers on the ground

This is 71 percent of the **GOAL**

National Conservation Buffer Team



Nearly 100 federal agencies, agricultural and conservation organizations, and agribusiness firms support USDA's buffer initiative.


An aerial photograph of a rural landscape showing a patchwork of agricultural fields. The fields are mostly brown, indicating they have been plowed, with some green areas. A network of narrow, winding green strips, known as conservation buffers, runs through the fields, following the contours of the land and connecting to a larger green area in the lower right. In the upper right, a small cluster of white buildings is visible. The overall scene illustrates the integration of natural vegetation into agricultural land management.

What are conservation buffers?

Narrow strips of land planted to permanent vegetation - grass, shrubs, and/or trees

Buffers protect natural or manmade elements of the landscape - lakes, streams, buildings, roads - from adverse consequences of human activity, such as agriculture and timber harvest, and certain natural calamities, such as floods.

Buffers can be planted:

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- **Within farm fields**
 - **At the edge of farm fields**
 - **Outside field margins**
 - **On grazing land and forest land**
 - **On urban landscapes**

Buffers are living filters and...

trap sediment and other pollutants...

slow stormwater runoff...

encourage infiltration...

clean the air

What do buffers mean to you?

Healthy, Productive Soils...



...on farms and ranches,
which provide us with
abundant, safe, inexpensive
food and fiber



Clean Water...



...in our lakes and streams



...and our water faucets

Improved Habitat...



...for fish and wildlife.

Cleaner Air...



...in our cities

...and in the countryside



Buffers can also...

...reduce
flooding



**... make more
attractive
landscapes in
both rural
and urban
areas.**



**...increase
safety in
farming and
ranching
operations.**



**... and
decrease
noise and
odor**



Different buffers for different positions on the landscapes



Filter Strips

...are areas of grass along streams and lakes that filter storm runoff and waste water by trapping sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, and other potential pollutants.



Riparian Buffers

...use the combination of trees, shrubs, and grass along stream and around lakes to filter out potential pollutants from both overland and subsurface water flows.



Grassed Waterways

...slow the flow of
water from farm
fields.



Contour Buffer Strips

...are multiple strips of grass planted on the contour in farm fields to reduce soil erosion and slow storm runoff.



Vegetative barriers or grass hedges

...likewise
reduce soil
erosion and slow
storm runoff.
They are
commonly much
narrower than
contour buffer
strips.



Cross-wind trap strips

...provide
protection for soil
and crops from
strong winds.



Herbaceous wind barriers

...likewise
provide protection
against strong
winds for soil and
crops. They are
narrower than
cross-wind strips.



Shelterbelts and Field Windbreaks

...are belts of trees designed to reduce wind erosion, improve air quality, and protect growing crops.



Living Snow Fences

...are an adaptation of shelterbelts and field windbreaks used to protect public roadways from heavy snow deposits.



Field borders

...protect against soil erosion and provide safe turning areas for farm machinery.



Alley Cropping

...uses contour grass strips in combination with tree plantings to solve soil erosion and water quality problems while introducing fruit, nut, and other tree crops into a farming system.



Conservation Buffers not only work environmentally, they also work economically for those agricultural producers willing to use them.

Several USDA conservation programs share with producers the cost of installing and maintaining buffers.



This cost-sharing arrangement allows producers to be good stewards of the land they depend upon for their livelihood and...



...at the same time, to produce the important environmental commodities that all Americans want and value.



For information about conservation buffers and to see what progress has been made toward USDA's 2-million-mile buffer goal, visit the worldwide web at:

www.nrcs.usda.gov

United States Department of Agriculture



NRCS

Natural Resources Conservation Service