

Riparian Buffer Preservation

Description

Preserve wide, undisturbed natural riparian areas along streams. These buffers help protect water quality by filtering pollutants, sediment and nutrients from runoff and aid in flood control, streambank stabilization and stream temperature control.

Basic Practice Guidelines

1. Protect and retain existing riparian vegetation whenever possible. Consider enhancing the existing buffer area by planting site-appropriate, native plants. Make the natural riparian area an integral part of the site design.
2. Clearly mark the riparian area to be protected on landscape plans. Generally, when landscaping in a riparian area do not clear existing vegetation, disturb soil by grading or stripping, or fill in these areas. Exceptions may include removal of dead/diseased vegetation, stream restoration and stabilization activities, installation of stormwater BMPs, etc.
3. Plan site drainage so that the hydrology of the riparian buffer area is maintained.
4. Restore natural vegetation in riparian areas whenever possible when it has been disturbed by development.
5. Check local regulations for buffer setback requirements, typically ranging from 25 feet to more than 100 feet. Features such as erodable soils, unstable streambank conditions, steep slopes, presence of a wildlife migration corridor, poor vegetative cover, property usage involving hazardous materials, etc., may warrant larger setbacks. Permits may be required to disturb land within the setback requirement.
6. Clearly specify landscape maintenance practices that are acceptable within buffer zones. For example, the use, storage and application of pesticides are generally not appropriate for these areas, with a few exceptions such as spot spraying of noxious weeds. Landscape maintenance equipment (e.g., mowers) should not be maintained in these areas.
7. Manage the riparian buffer canopy to maintain maximum vigor of the overstory and understory.

BMP Type			
Design			X
Installation			X
Maintenance/Operation			X
Green Industry Relevance			
ASLA	X	GCC	
ALCC	X	ISA	X
CALCP	X	RMSGGA	
CGGA		WFC	
CNA			

Regional or Industry Considerations/Adaptations

1. Land development in the Rocky Mountains is occurring rapidly. Because of the terrain associated with this mountainous area, most of the development occurs along valley floors. This growth pattern focuses development around streams, rivers, wetlands and lakes. Without adequate planning and management, development around these water features can degrade water quality, water quantity (pre-development hydrology) and riparian habitat.

Preserving undeveloped riparian corridors in high mountain valleys is an important commitment to help protect water quality and aquatic life.



Preservation of wide, undisturbed riparian corridors helps to protect water quality.

Source: Wright Water Engineers, Inc.

Key References

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