



Riparian Forests for Landowners Program

Providing Flexible, No-Cost Forest Buffer Installation

Forestry Topic 66

March 2024

Riparian forest buffers (buffers) are transition areas that protect streams, creeks or other water features by slowing the flow of water and capturing sediment, nutrients and pollutants in the soil before they reach the water. Buffers provide additional benefits beyond water quality protection. Tree roots stabilize the soil, prevent erosion and mitigate flood impacts. Trees shade and cool streams for aquatic life and the forest provides habitat for wildlife. A buffer can add beauty to the landscape, provide a place for relaxation and recreation, and even produce fruits and nuts for human consumption. Landowners can improve their property and protect water quality by planting a new buffer.

Program Objective

The Virginia Department of Forestry (DOF) Riparian Forests for Landowners (RFLL) program provides flexible, no-cost forest buffer installation and one year of maintenance to landowners. The program is being implemented by DOF and partner organizations in a unique watershed-based partnership.

Funding is provided by the Inflation Reduction Act through the USDA Forest Service and the Commonwealth of Virginia's Water Quality Improvement Fund Act.

Eligibility

This program is open to private property owners including property/homeowner's associations or civic leagues in rural, urban or suburban areas.

Funding and Requirements

This turnkey program covers the planning, site preparation, planting and one year of maintenance for buffer plantings.

- ◆ Buffers may be pine, hardwood or a mix of both.
- ◆ Buffers must be at least 35 feet wide and no greater than 300 feet wide per side from the water's edge.
- ◆ Land must have less than 20% coverage by invasive plant species to qualify for this program.
- ◆ The landowner must agree to retain the buffer as forest for 15 years.



Buffer Planting Location

Buffers can be installed on open land adjacent to a water feature where a forested buffer of at least 35 feet in width from the water's edge can be planted. An existing buffer may be expanded up to 300 feet from the water's edge.

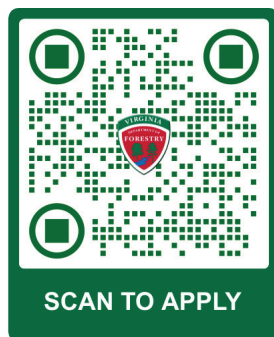
The water feature may be any of the following bodies of water:

- ◆ Streams
- ◆ Rivers
- ◆ Lakes, ponds and reservoirs/municipal water supplies
- ◆ Seeps and springs
- ◆ Karst features
- ◆ Sloughs
- ◆ Wetlands
- ◆ Water features within wetlands
- ◆ Fresh and saltwater marshes
- ◆ Irrigation ditches, canals and other man-made water features

To Apply

DOF will accept continuous sign-ups for this program until funding is depleted. Eligible projects will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis with planned buffer establishment from fall 2024 to spring 2025 and follow-up maintenance support through 2026

Complete this survey-style [Landowner Interest Form](#) and a DOF forester or representative from one of our partner organizations will reach out to you. You may



also reach out directly to the DOF Watershed staff contact below.

Partners

Thank you to our partners who are assisting with implementation of buffer projects for this program:

- ◆ Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay
- ◆ Friends of the Rappahannock
- ◆ James River Association
- ◆ Terra Habitats LLC
- ◆ York River Steward

Contact Us

For more information or questions, contact the DOF Watershed staff at:

Watershed@DOF.Virginia.gov
(434) 220-9024

For more information about services or programs in your area, contact your local VDOF office:

www.dof.virginia.gov



Virginia Department of Forestry

900 Natural Resources Dr., Suite 800
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Phone: (434) 977-6555; VDOF@DOF.Virginia.gov

FT0066; 03/2024

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.