

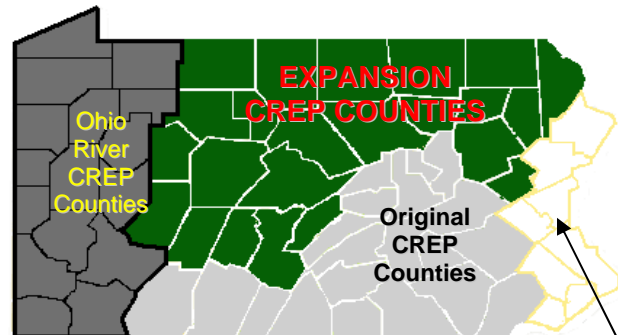
CREP Fact Sheet: Riparian Forest Buffer (CP 22)

Written for

EXPANSION CREP COUNTIES (see below)

By Chesapeake Bay Foundation April 20, 2006

Streamside forested buffers done through CREP provide key conservation benefits at a substantial profit. This fact sheet describes those benefits, key program information and next steps to help interested landowners put buffers to work for them. These buffers are also called riparian forest buffers. USDA's shorthand is "CP 22" for "conservation practice #22."



Continuous Conservation Reserve Program available in place of CREP

Economic Benefits:



Buffers 50 feet or wider earn up to 140% of eligible installation costs: USDA's Farm Service Agency provides payments up to 90% of the cost of installation on buffers 35 feet or wider and a sign-up incentive of \$10/acre for each year of the contract (10-15 year options). PA Dept. of Environmental Protection adds an additional 50% cost share for buffers 50 feet or wider. Most projects earn a profit from project installation.

USDA also provides generous annual payments commonly \$85 to \$150+ per acre: Payments include the base soil rental rate x 250% and maintenance payments of \$7-10/acre. This strong, reliable annual income is a major selling point for CREP buffers, leading many landowners to enroll the maximum widths and acreages possible.

Buffers also qualify landowners for doubled cost-share on other CREP practices:

- Wetland restoration (CP 23)*
- Native grasses on highly erodible cropland (CP 2)
- Wildlife habitat on highly erodible cropland (CP 4D)
- Tame grasses on highly erodible cropland (CP 1)
- Grassed waterways (CP 8)
- Contour grass strips (CP 15A)

*CP 23 is actually eligible for PA DEP's 50% cost share even without buffers.



Photo: PA Game Commission

Conservation Benefits:

Improved stream health & water quality:

We've long known forests are tops at keeping pollutants from reaching streams. New research shows that streamside forests also multiply a stream's ability to remove pollutants that do reach the stream. While this is a major insight with big implications, it shouldn't be a surprise. The stream organisms that clean the water work best when given the types of food, light levels, temperatures, and overall conditions that they've been accustomed to in streams running through "Penn's Woods" for thousands of years.



Reduced bank erosion, less flooding: Bank erosion is a normal process, but removal of woody vegetation accelerates erosion since grasses don't offer much strength. In time, trees will reduce erosion rates. Forest soils are great sponges, absorbing lots of water that can become helpful groundwater instead of damaging flood water.



Photo: William Paff

Stewardship of soil, water and wildlife: Streamside forests are the key to keeping soil where it belongs and keeping water clean. Buffers absorb much of the excess nutrients and other adverse chemicals in runoff water. Wildlife benefits of buffers are enormous, with a long list of game and non-game animals benefiting from these key streamside corridors that produce a smorgasbord of berries, seeds and insects. Songbirds show a quick and substantial response. Fisheries rebound dramatically – in one study of a fenced buffer, the fishery increased by 400% in just a few years.

Pluses for Livestock Owners:

- Improved herd health and biosecurity: clean, dry livestock are at less risk
- Expanded options for pasture management via high tensile electric buffer fences
- Improved watering facilities, stabilized stream crossings and laneways
- Good public relations through profitable, voluntary conservation



Unmanaged access to creeks exposes livestock to numerous risks for injury and disease.

Eligibility:

Most rural, unforested land within 180' of streams, ponds and wetlands with open water is eligible. Unlike most of CREP's practices, to be eligible as a forested buffer (CP 22) land does not need to have a documented cropping history. Cropland, pasture land, even idle land is eligible, as long as it does not already have more than 30% coverage by trees or shrubs. Landowners do not need to be farmers. Buffers must be at least 35 feet wide (top of stream bank to edge of buffer) and may be as wide as 180 feet.

Landowner Responsibilities:

Landowners are responsible for project success (70% tree survival after three years) and for following the terms of the CREP agreement. Projects installed and managed as advised should have little difficulty reaching success. Probably the single most valuable maintenance activity is routine herbicide application around tree shelters – this deters voles (mouse-like rodents responsible for the majority of planting failures) and substantially boosts growth by suppressing competition. Projects include a maintenance plan that describes activities key to project success.



Voles gnawing on young trees are a leading cause of failed plantings.

Photo: Dr. Jonathon Kays



Herbicide strips with mowing between the rows provides excellent protection from voles and superior growth for young trees.

Photo: Phil Pannill

Professional Assistance Available:

At no cost to landowners, conservation agency professionals assist with project details from initial visit to discuss management goals through project design, installation supervision and required follow-up checks years afterward. Typically, contractors (paid by landowner) will do the actual work of planting trees and building any needed fences, etc. While a few landowners do this initial work, most are content to let professionals put the projects on the ground. Landowners are responsible for selecting and paying any contractors needed for project implementation. CREP provides reimbursement after project installation, and cash flow is a consideration to bear in mind.

How to Get Started:

Interested landowners should call the local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office. Local phone numbers are available by calling 1-800-941-CREP. Tell them you are interested in CREP's CP 22 - the forested buffer. They will initiate the process at no obligation, and can describe additional ways CREP may be of help to your income and management goals.

Additional Information:

- 1-800-941-CREP for basic information and county contact phone numbers
- www.creppa.org for much more detailed information and links to other websites
- local USDA FSA and NRCS staff for specific questions

CREP is partnership of federal, state and private groups including:



USDA Farm Service Agency, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PA Dept. of Environmental Protection, and PA Game Commission, along with Center for Rural PA, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Ducks Unlimited, PA Association of Conservation Districts, PA Dept. of Agriculture, PA Dept. of Conservation of Natural Resources, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Partners for Wildlife, Pheasants Forever, State Conservation Commission, and Western PA Conservancy.



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This fact sheet was prepared April 20, 2006 by Chesapeake Bay Foundation, a non-profit group with PA headquarters in Harrisburg. CBF provides field staff to assist landowners with CREP project work and other forested buffer restoration programs. Since 1997, CBF has invested more than \$7 million in voluntary conservation measures in PA, and helped over 700 landowners install more than 1600 miles of forested buffers. CBF's mission is to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed to maintain a high quality of life for the region's residents.