

# QUICK FACTS **Vegetated Riparian Buffers** *Economic Service Providers*



## VEGETATED RIPARIAN BUFFERS

**WHAT** - Lands next to bodies of water that are planted with trees, shrubs, and other vegetation

**WHERE** - Can be planted along rivers, streams, ponds, estuaries, and wetlands

**WHY** - Because buffers at least 100 feet wide on each side of a waterway help to provide diverse economic benefits

In addition to providing ecological benefits, vegetated riparian buffers also provide important economic benefits that shouldn't be overlooked. The implementation of buffers helps to mitigate costs linked to water quality, storm and flood protection, erosion control, and health issues.

Riparian buffers provide great benefits to the water quality of the waterway and for flood reduction. By using buffers to gain these benefits naturally, less money needs to be spent on human engineered systems to achieve water quality standards and prevent or reduce flooding. Additionally, fewer and less severe floods result in fewer dollars needed for flood damages and recovery services.

According to a study by ECONorthwest in 2018, one acre of riparian buffer provides monetized benefits of over \$10,000 per acre per year. Buffers also provide many benefits to the community that are difficult to monetarily assess, such as lives saved, health costs reduced, and sick days avoided. These positive economic impacts demonstrate that riparian buffers are vital to the well-being of both the community and economy.

## Buffers by the Numbers

**\$57**  
million

The amount Fairfax County, VA was able to avoid in stormwater management costs by retaining forested buffers

Number of jobs in the US supported by the outdoor recreation economy

**6.1** million

**850**

The number of deaths shown by a computer simulation to have been prevented by trees and forests in the US

Annual amount the US spends on soil conservation practices to limit soil losses from agricultural fields

**\$5** billion



## Did you know?

- Drinking water standards can be achieved at **lower costs** through the use of riparian buffers than through human engineered treatment.
- Both residents and planners **prefer riparian buffers** in both suburban and rural landscapes.
- Riparian buffers provide **air pollution reduction** benefits and improve water quality.
- Buffers provide great hiking, birding, camping, fishing, boating, hunting, picnicking, swimming, and wildlife viewing areas **for the public**.
- The aesthetic value of riparian buffers can have a **direct economic impact** through increased property values, increased business sales, and increased livability.
- By providing shade, windbreaks, and winter cover, riparian buffers can **reduce heating and cooling costs** for homes and buildings.
- Economic benefits from riparian buffers come in the form of **cost savings** and cost avoidance.
- Riparian buffers **reduce erosion**, thereby reducing the costs associated with erosion control, and minimizing the harms associated with sedimentation downstream.
- **Flooding costs decrease** with riparian buffers by decreasing flood frequency, eliminating the need for expensive stormwater infrastructure, and reducing flood damages.

## Want to learn more?



The information in this handout is compiled from *Vegetated Riparian Buffers: Economic Service Providers*, a white paper from the Delaware Riverkeeper Network that looks at the role of streamside buffers in healthy ecosystems. Contact the Delaware Riverkeeper Network to request the full paper. When you contact us, be sure to ask about our other resources on riparian buffers.

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