

Why Do Stream Buffers Matter?

As a streamside landowner, you have the opportunity to influence the condition of the stream that runs through your property. There are also important regulations that require protection of streams and other water resources (see other side of this sheet). Conscientious stewardship of your land will help protect water quality and habitat for fish and wildlife.

Many streams in Skamania and Klickitat Counties provide habitat to salmon, steelhead, and resident fish. One of the best ways to protect and enhance fish habitat, even upstream of where these fish reside, is to maintain a functional and diverse riparian habitat.

Riparian buffers, or the plants along a stream or river, link the land and water together and have significant biological and ecological importance. Native plants protect your property by slowing runoff and allowing it to soak into the ground, recharging wells and reducing flooding. Roots help hold the soil in place and control erosion. Trees cast their shade over the water to keep it cool for fish and frogs and provide perching places for birds and bugs. Protect a diverse native buffer around streams and wetlands if you already have one, and enhance what is already there. Plants that are native to your area will create the most valuable buffers. It can take several years for plants to fill in, so start planting!

The best care for your buffer requires very little input, so resist the urge to “tidy up.” A “messy”-looking stream buffer is ecologically diverse and provides good habitat. Leaf litter, pine needles, and fallen branches or logs help collect runoff and prevent erosion. If a large tree threatens to fall from a steep bank, you can cut the tree 10 feet above the ground surface and leave the root system in place. The “snag” that remains on the streamside will provide a great home for owls, bats and other wildlife.

Resources and assistance are available to help you improve your riparian buffer. Contact Underwood Conservation District to:

- purchase native, riparian plants
- plan a native planting project
- access cost-share assistance



Photo at upper right is an example of an **unhealthy riparian area**, lacking in vegetation, cover or instream habitat complexity.

Below is an example of a **healthy, functional, diverse riparian area**.

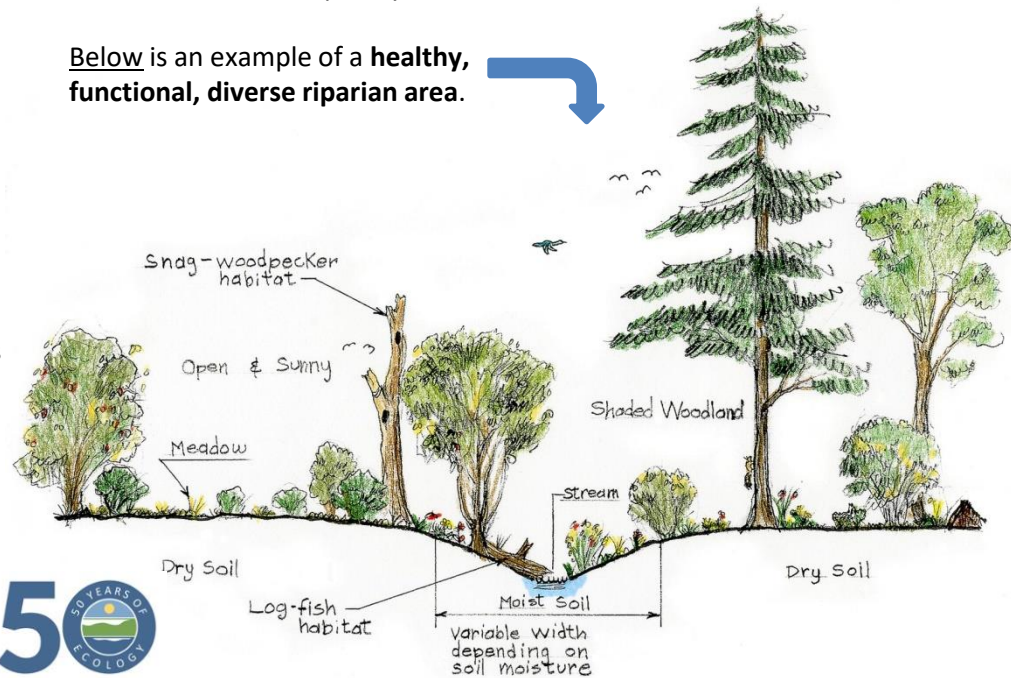


Photo and some text are from: Mid-Columbia Fisheries Enhancement Group. Landscape architecture by: Jurgen Hess. Some text is from: Connecticut River Joint Commission "Backyard Buffers" publication



Questions about streams or other water resources?

We've got you covered!

Activities with potential to disturb historic or archaeological resources require review by Washington Dept. of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and interested tribes.

Anyone can report an environmental problem or concern: 509-575-2490
<https://ecology.wa.gov/About-us/Get-involved/Report-an-environmental-issue>

Many activities affecting natural resources in the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area must be reviewed by the Columbia River Gorge Commission - 509-493-3323 - in Klickitat County and by Skamania County Community Development in Skamania County - 509-427-3900

Water Quality

Department of Ecology
Cole Provence: 509-454-4174

Environmental Protection Agency

Water Rights & Withdrawals

Department of Ecology
Ryan Murphy: 509-249-6327 or 509-575-2597

confidential water right info
WA Water Trust: 509-844-4146
Trout Unlimited: 509-881-5464

fish screens
Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

Forested Lands

Department of Natural Resources
509-493-3218

Vegetation, Trees, Critical Areas & Wetlands

Klickitat County Planning Dept.
Mo-chi Lindblad: 509-773-5703
Skamania County Community Development
Alan Peters: 509-427-3900

Dept. of Ecology
Lori White: 509-575-2616
Miranda Adams: 360-690-7164

In-Water Work

Department of Fish & Wildlife
Amber Johnson: 360-701-2738
Sam Kolb: 360-260-6365
Emergency Hotline: 360-902-2537

Dept. of Ecology
Lori White: 509-575-2616
Miranda Adams: 360-690-7164

US Army Corps of Engineers

Underwood Conservation District is available to provide non-regulatory advice and assistance for a variety of natural resource questions and concerns: 509-493-1936 or www.ucdwa.org