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Water Quality and Wildlife Enhancement Activity – *ANM05- Extending Riparian Forest Buffers for Water Quality Protection and Wildlife Habitat*

New Jersey Addendum

Extend existing buffers
Where existing buffers are utilized, extend them to gain more efficiency in intercepting overland flow and reducing the transport of nutrients, pesticides and agro-chemicals.

Land Use Applicability
This enhancement is applicable on cropland and pasture land.

Benefits
Widening existing conservation buffers (e.g., filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, field borders) that currently meet NRCS conservation practice standard criteria can provide food and cover for native and game species as well as enhancing aquatic habitat by providing shade, input of wood or carbon to the stream, and stabilizing streambank conditions. Additionally, these extended buffers offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals.

Riparian habitats are important transition zones between terrestrial landscapes and aquatic zones. Wildlife species utilize these transition zones because they provide a unique combination of cover, access to water and often provide important travel corridors. Extending existing buffers not only enhances wildlife habitat but it increases the effectiveness of water quality protection they provide to the streams.

Criteria for Extending Existing Buffers
Existing buffers must meet minimum state requirements for width. Extend the existing buffer for a total of 60 feet or more to enhance habitat and water quality functions.

The extended buffer must be composed of at least 5 species of non-noxious, wildlife friendly grasses, perennial forbs, shrubs, and\or trees best suited to site conditions. Include species that provide pollinator food and habitat where possible.

- **Choose 5 species from the "*NRCS New Jersey Pasture/Hayland Species that also promote wildlife conservation*" list.**
- All site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice standard criteria and specifications.
- Forested riparian buffers shall consist of a diversity of tree and shrub species of which the majority are capable of producing fruit or nuts and trees which, when mature, will achieve heights of at least 60 feet and 60% canopy closure. **Choose tree and shrub species according to *Tree/Shrub Establishment Code 612*, Table 1, of the New Jersey Field Office Technical Guide.**
- Any use of the buffer must not compromise its intended purpose.
- To the extent possible the buffer areas and extended buffer areas will be vegetated to increase overland flow interception and increase water quality values of the stream or water body.

For full implementation of this enhancement, continuous buffers must be used on all lands adjacent to streams, lakes and ponds where annual crops are produced.

Operation and Maintenance:

- Once established, buffers must not be mowed, disked, grazed, or otherwise disturbed, until after the primary wildlife ground nesting period has ended **(April 1st-July 15th in New Jersey)**.

- Buffers will be regularly maintained for its intended purpose through the life of the contract. This includes any removal of vegetation, including grazing.

- Grazing is allowed if a grazing management plan is used that protects the integrity, diversity and function of the riparian area.

- Buffers will have a wildlife management plan to maintain established plant communities through the life of the contract. The wildlife plan will maintain the plant community and its structural diversity and provide habitat for intended species, remove duff, and control woody vegetation.

Documentation Requirements

1. A map showing the location and size of enhanced riparian forest buffers.
2. Documentation of the type and rates of vegetation planted in the new riparian forest buffers.