

Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM32 – Extend existing filter strips or riparian herbaceous cover for water quality protection and wildlife habitat



Enhancement Description

Where existing filter strips or riparian herbaceous covers (i.e., buffers) are utilized, extend them to gain more efficiency in intercepting overland flow and reducing the transport of nutrients, pesticides and agro-chemicals, and for wildlife habitat.

Land Use Applicability

Cropland, Pastureland, Rangeland

Benefits

Widening existing buffers can provide food and cover for native and game species as well as enhancing aquatic habitat. Extended buffers offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals. Buffers can also mitigate pesticide drift during pesticide applications and pollen drift where the mixing of plant varieties is not desired.

Buffer 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. Often buffers are adjacent to riparian areas or are important contributors to clean water, and habitat areas nearby. Extending existing buffers not only enhances wildlife habitat but it increases the effectiveness of water quality protection they provide to the streams.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies

This enhancement only applies to acres of existing buffers on crop, pasture, or range land uses.

Criteria

1. Extend the existing buffer for a total of 60 feet or more to enhance habitat and water quality functions.
2. The extended buffers must be composed of at least 5 species of non-noxious, wildlife friendly grasses and/or perennial forbs best suited to site conditions. Include species that provide pollinator food and habitat where possible.
3. All site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice standard criteria and specifications.



4. Any use of the buffer must not compromise its intended purpose. Vegetation from buffers can be harvested for bio-energy as long as the harvesting is done in accordance with a plan that does not compromise the water quality and wildlife benefits of the extended buffer.
5. To the extent possible the buffer areas and extended buffer areas will be shaped and vegetated to increase overland flow interception and increase water quality values of the stream or water body.
6. The extension of buffers can incorporate other buffer types (riparian forest) where applicable to meet specific operator management goals.

Operation and Maintenance

1. Once established, buffers must not be mowed, disked, grazed, or otherwise disturbed during the primary wildlife ground nesting period.
2. Buffers will be regularly maintained for the intended purpose through the life of the contract. This includes any removal of vegetation, including grazing.
 - a. Grazing is not permitted unless a grazing management plan is in effect.
 - b. The grazing management plan must protect the integrity, diversity and function of the riparian area.
3. 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.
4. The grazing management plan and the wildlife management plan shall complement each other.

Adoption Requirements

This enhancement is considered adopted when the buffer has a total width of 60 feet or more for the selected land use.

Documentation Requirements

1. A map showing the location and size of the existing and enhanced buffer.
2. Documentation of the type and rates of vegetation planted in the new buffer areas.

Michigan Supplement

ANM 32

Refer to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) conservation practice standard Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390) for establishment, operation and maintenance instructions located in the electronic Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG). Use the NRCS Michigan (MI) Conservation Cover (327) practice standard to select a seed mixture with a minimum of 5 species. Eligible wildlife-friendly mixtures include Grass and Legume Mixtures (Table 2) numbers 4,7,10, 11 or 14; any seed mixture from General Mixtures for Wildlife Habitat (Table 4) and Examples of General Mixtures for Wildlife Habitat (Table 5) **except the following species** as per the State Biologist recommendation:

- 1/ Pale Purple Coneflower
 - 2/ Iron Weed
 - 3/ Tall Coreopsis
 - 4/ Rosinweed*
 - 5/ Compass Plant*
 - 6/ Cup Plant
 - 7/ Round Leaf Ragwort
 - 8/ Sweet Black-Eyed Susan
- *unless there are Michigan genotypes available

The following plant species are non-noxious and wildlife-friendly and may be included in riparian forest buffers:

Grasses and Legumes**

Introduced Grasses and Legumes
Alfalfa
Alsike Clover
Orchardgrass
Red Clover
Redtop
Timothy
White Dutch Clover
Native Grasses
Big Bluestem
Eastern Gamagrass
Indiangrass
Intermediate Wheatgrass
Little Bluestem
Switchgrass

All wildflower species are eligible for planting with wildlife –friendly native grasses provided that they are considered **native to Michigan per Michigan Flora: <http://michiganflora.net/>, are known to occur in the same major eco-region as the project site (Figure 1), and are adapted to local soil conditions. For native species, use local genotype seed wherever possible.



Figure 1. Major eco-regions of Michigan.

Contact the State Biologist for further guidance on using Michigan native wildflower species in this enhancement not listed in the Conservation Cover (327) Practice Standard.