Animal Enhancement Activity – ANM05 - Extending riparian forest buffers for water quality protection and wildlife habitat

Enhancement Description
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
Cropland, pastureland and rangeland.

Benefits
Widening existing riparian forest buffers that currently meet NRCS conservation practice water quality 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. Extended buffers offer more surface area to filter out sediments and agro-chemicals. Riparian forest buffers can also offer buffers to mitigate pesticide drift during pesticide applications and pollen drift where the mixing of plant varieties is not desired.

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
Existing buffers must meet minimum state water quality criteria 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 trees and shrubs best suited to site conditions. Include species that provide pollinator food and habitat where possible.

1. All site preparation and plant establishment shall be accomplished according to the appropriate NRCS conservation practice standard criteria and specifications.
2. 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.
3. Any use of the buffer must not compromise its intended purpose.

4. 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.
5. The extension of riparian forest buffers can incorporate other buffer types (riparian herbaceous and filter strips) where applicable to meet specific operator management goals.

Operation and Maintenance

1. Once established, buffers must not be mowed, disked, grazed, or otherwise disturbed, until after the primary wildlife ground nesting period has ended.
2. Buffers will be regularly maintained for its intended purpose through the life of the contract. This includes any removal of vegetation, including grazing.
3. Grazing is allowed if a grazing management plan is used that protects the integrity, diversity and function of the riparian area.
4. 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.

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The average width of the existing buffer must be a minimum of 55 feet in order to be eligible to apply this enhancement.

The average total width of the buffer following installation of the enhancement must be a minimum of 65 feet up to a maximum of 150 feet.

Note: If the existing buffer is an average width of 55 to 140 feet, the participant must at extend the existing buffer by a minimum width of 10 feet.

Follow Wisconsin Conservation Practice Standard 391 (Riparian Forest Buffer) and Wisconsin Forestry Technical Note 1, 2, and 3:

http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/WI/391.pdf
ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/WI/technotes/forestry-tn1.pdf
ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/WI/technotes/forestry-tn2.pdf
ftp://ftp-fc.sc.egov.usda.gov/WI/technotes/forestry-tn3.pdf

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Primary ground wildlife nesting season is from May 15 through August 1st.

Written documentation shall include a summary of the moisture regime of the site, the method of establishment and the plant species established. Provide an annual summary of site management and weed control activities implemented.