



CONSERVE New Hampshire Buffers boast benefits on & off farms

The word “buffer” may evoke a safety net, a filter or an area of shrubs and trees. In the landscape context, that’s pretty much what it is.

A buffer, when referred to by a conservationist at the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, is a small strip of land of trees, shrubs and other plants. This strip provides protection from things like wind or pollutants entering waterways and plays a crucial role as a safety net for the environment.

Conservation buffers trap sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, pathogens and heavy metals. To do this, buffers act like natural filters, removing nutrients or sediment that runs off the field, keeping them from entering New Hampshire’s waterways like the.

If properly used, buffers remove more than 50 percent of nutrients and pesticides, 60 percent of some pathogens and 75 percent of sediment.

In addition to trapping pollutants, buffers slow water runoff and increase the amount of water that enters the ground, recharging our aquifers and protecting communities downstream from flooding.

During the winter buffers help trap snow and cut down on soil erosion in areas with strong winds. They also can protect livestock and wildlife from harsh weather, shield buildings from wind damage and reduce noise and odor coming from a farm.

Buffers also give many benefits for local wildlife. They provide food and shelter for many wildlife species like quail, rabbit and other fun-to-watch species while serving as corridor connectors that enable wildlife to move safely from one habitat area to another.

A conservation buffer’s trees and shrubs shade streams and cool the water, making the water a better home for plants and critters. Without trees and shade, streams become warmer, lowering populations of aquatic species. Also, buffer trees and shrubs stabilize streams by holding the earth in place with their roots. In addition to their vital services, buffers simply beautify the landscape, enhancing the natural aesthetics of a farm or ranch.

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The NRCS helps private landowners create buffers on their land, along waterways and between fields. If used as part of a comprehensive conservation system, buffers make good use of areas that are not ideal for growing crops or other uses.

But buffers aren't just for rural areas – they're helpful in suburbs and cities alike. Buffers in these areas can yield the same benefits, especially along waterways and other ecologically sensitive areas.

Whether you live in the country or a big city, buffers will help improve the environment near you. Equip your property with buffers if you can, and encourage your local officials to do the same, protecting streams and other key landscapes. Stop by your local NRCS office to learn how to get started.

About NRCS:

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service helps America's farmers and ranchers conserve the nation's soil, water, air and other natural resources. All programs are voluntary and offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment. Learn more at www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov.

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