



Riparian Buffer Program



Background

Elevated water temperatures and sedimentation of waterways has negatively impacted salmon habitat across Washington. As a non-regulatory federal agency, with the mission of *helping people help the land*, we hope to leverage our *voluntary* programs to help improve salmon habitat while compensating producers who want to help us achieve this appropriately.

What

NRCS-Washington built a new Riparian Buffer Program for Fiscal Year 2023. The program incentivizes producers who *voluntarily* install riparian buffers. Producers will be compensated for their time, the materials required to install the buffers, **and for foregone income** for the land taken out of production.

When

The program was announced on Dec. 5, 2022 and the sign up period is or was open through Jan. 13, 2023. The signup is or was open for more than a month to allow producers time to consider the positive benefits of enrolling their lands. However, producers can engage NRCS conservation planners at any time, not just within this program sign-up period.

Why

The objective of the program is to help reduce sediment and lower water temperatures across Washington to help salmon habitat. The program will help financially compensate producers who voluntarily help achieve this objective by enrolling their lands.

Where

The program will be available to producers across the state of Washington.

How

There are dozens of conservation practices producers can adopt to improve their riparian areas with NRCS. Each practice has a payment rate associated with it, which can be combined with other practices within their conservation plan.

Producers can choose between herbaceous or woody buffers, as well as native or non-native plantings that could potentially increase habitat for terrestrial animals, pollinators, and other wildlife. Producers are encouraged to talk with their local NRCS field office staff, who can help them tailor a conservation plan specific to their wants and needs. Ultimately, enrollment is *completely voluntary*, and producers have the final say in whether they adopt the plans developed with NRCS planners. For more information, please contact your [local NRCS field office](#).

NOTE

There is a potential for a financial incentive contract up to 5 years based on the payment rates on the second page of this fact sheet, to compensate landowners for the foregone income lost when they install a buffer.

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FY23 Riparian Buffer Program

Practices & Payment Scenarios (Payment estimates)

Tier 1. Non-native perennial herbaceous cover

Description: Plant perennial vegetation to filter pollutants from adjacent agriculture from entering streams. Allows for forage harvest (working buffer). Treats one or more water quality resource concerns.

Buffer Functions: Filter pollutants and slows bank erosion.

Notes: Maximum buffer width of 200 feet. Tier 1 available for intermittent streams.

Option 1 - Working Land Buffer (delayed forage harvest)

Activity	Code	Scenario	Notes	Incentive (per year/acre)	5-Year Contract Total (per acre)
Herbaceous Weed Treatment (1 year only)	315	8	Two treatments	\$116.79	\$116.79
Conservation Cover (1 year only)	327	1	Introduced species	\$168.33	\$168.33
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management	645	3	High intensity & complexity	\$114.92	\$574.60

Five-year contract total per acre: **\$859.72**

Option 2 - with Foregone Income (FI)

Activity	Code	Scenario	Notes	Incentive (per year/acre)	5-Year Contract Total (per acre)
Herbaceous Weed Treatment (1 year only)	315	8	Two treatments	\$116.79	\$116.79
Conservation Cover (1 year only)	327	1	Introduced species	\$168.33	\$168.33
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management w/ FI *	645	4	High intensity & complexity	\$312.99	\$1,564.95

Five-year contract total per acre: **\$1,850.07**

Tier 2. Native perennial herbaceous cover

Description: Plant perennial native perennial vegetation to improve water quality, adds wildlife and/or pollinator habitat with optional harvest.

Buffer Functions: Filter pollutants, slow bank erosion, and terrestrial habitat for wildlife and pollinators.

Notes: Maximum buffer width of 200 feet. Tier 2 available for intermittent streams.

Activity	Code	Scenario	Notes	Incentive (per year/acre)	5-Year Contract Total (per acre)
Herbaceous Weed Treatment (1 year only)	315	8	Two treatments	\$116.79	\$116.79
Wildlife Habitat Planting w/ FI (1 year only)	420	262	Low species diversity	\$651.41	\$651.41
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management w/ FI *	645	4	High intensity & complexity	\$312.99	\$1,564.95

Five-year contract total per acre: **\$2,333.15**

Tier 3. Native woody vegetation - wildlife and pollinators

Description: Install narrow riparian buffer of woody shrubs and trees (35 ft wide) to provide terrestrial wildlife and pollinator habitat as in Tier 2 + treats elevated water temperature on small modified streams (<20 ft BFW) & man-made ditches.

Buffer Functions: Filter pollutants, slow bank erosion, terrestrial habitat for wildlife and pollinators, shade on small modified channels.

Notes: Maximum buffer width of 200 feet. Tier 3 available for intermittent streams.

Activity	Code	Scenario	Notes	Incentive (per year/acre)	5-Year Contract Total (per acre)
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (1 year only)	490	7	Hand, individual spot spray, light vegetation	\$246.21	\$246.21
Hedgerow Planting w/ FI (1 year only) Example: 35 ft wide x 800 ft long (one side) = 0.6 acre Typical unit = 800 ft long hedgerow	422	27	2 woody rows	\$9.71 (per foot)	\$7,768.00
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management w/ FI *	645	4	High intensity & complexity	\$312.99	\$1,564.95

Five-year contract total per acre: **\$9,579.16**

Tier 4. Native woody vegetation - riparian forest buffer

Description: Install riparian forest buffer using 391 standard (35 ft minimum width for herbaceous cover and 50 ft minimum width for riparian forest buffer), and man-made ditches.

Buffer Functions: Filter pollutants, slow bank erosion, terrestrial habitat for wildlife and pollinators, shade, overhanging cover, allow channel meander.

Notes: Maximum buffer width of 200 feet. Tier 4 not available for intermittent streams.

Activity	Code	Scenario	Notes	Incentive (per year/acre)	5-Year Contract Total (per acre)
Tree/Shrub Site Preparation (1 year only)	490	7	Hand, individual spot spray, light vegetation	\$246.21	\$246.21
Riparian Forest Buffer w/ FI (1 year only)	391	52	Bare-root & hand planted **	\$3,302.98	\$3,302.98
Upland Wildlife Habitat Management w/ FI *	645	4	High intensity & complexity	\$312.99	\$1,564.95

Five-year contract total per acre: **\$5,114.14**

* Monitor vegetation establishment, delay forage harvest & spot spray weeds.)

** Payment rate is based on typical bare root conservation grade trees and shrubs that are cheaper and more readily available.

NOTE

All of these scenarios and associated payment rates are estimates. Please work with your [local field office](#) to discuss your best, completely voluntary, options to improve your natural resources. Also, historically underserved communities may have access to even higher payment rates

