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Buffers: Protecting Water Resources

New Hampshire Estuaries Project

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Buffers: Protecting Water Resources

Free Assistance for Your Conservation Commission or Planning Board

Buffers

A buffer is a vegetated area along a shoreline, wetland, or stream where development is restricted or prohibited. The primary function of a buffer is to physically protect and separate a stream, lake, or wetland from future disturbance or encroachment.



Benefits:

- minimize the impacts of impervious surfaces
- prevent erosion
- protect the water quality of lakes, streams, wetlands, and drinking water by:
 - filtering sediments
 - acting as a pollution filter, transformer, and sink
 - slowing the velocity of run-off
 - stabilizing the bank and bed of surface waters
 - creating wildlife and aquatic habitat
 - improving recreational aesthetics

Impervious Surfaces

Impervious surfaces are structures that prevent rain water from penetrating into the ground, such as parking lots, roads, lawns, sidewalks and roofs.



When it rains or when snow melts, water runs off of impervious surfaces with greater quantity and velocity than would occur naturally.

This results in erosion and flooding. Furthermore, pollutants like heavy metals, toxics, trash, pathogens, sediment, hydrocarbons, fertilizers, and pesticides are washed quickly into surface waters where they damage aquatic systems and lower water quality.

Put simply: The more impervious surfaces (development) in an area, the lower the water quality of the local streams and rivers*.

* U.S. Geological Survey, *Effects of Urbanization on Stream Quality at Selected Sites in the Seacoast Region in New Hampshire, 2001-03.*

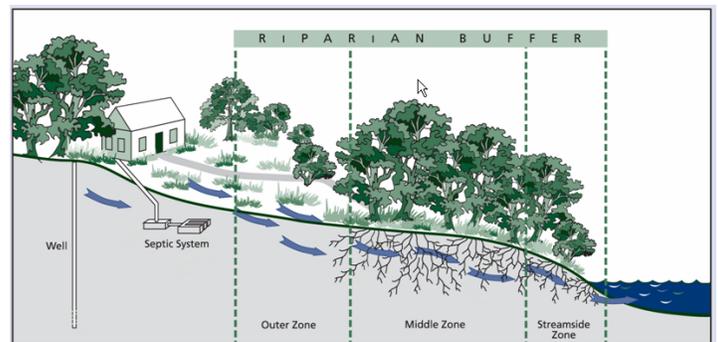
Community Outreach and Education

The New Hampshire Estuaries Project can help your community understand the importance of buffers and what can be done to protect them.

We offer a variety of options to best meet your community's needs. We can simply be available to answer questions at a meeting, give a 20 minute introductory presentation, or conduct a complete buffer protection workshop.

For more information or to schedule assistance contact:

Jodi Castallo
Project Coordinator
603-862-2641
jodi.castallo@unh.edu



Courtesy of NOAA