

## **Attachment H: Buffer Strips**

Buffer strips are a common-sense way to protect land. Best described as strips or small areas of land in permanent vegetation, conservation buffers help control potential pollutants and manage other environmental concerns. They also help protect soil, air, and water quality; improve fish and wildlife habitat; and demonstrate a commitment to land stewardship. Filter strips, field borders, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, contour grass strips, and riparian (streamside) buffers are all examples of conservation buffers.

Filter strips are strips of grass used to trap sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants before they reach streams and lakes.

Field borders are grass-seeded areas along the edges of crop fields.

Grassed waterways are strips of grass seeded within cropland where water tends to concentrate or flow off a field. While they are primarily used to prevent gully erosion, waterways can be combined with filter strips or riparian buffers to trap sediment and other pollutants.

Field windbreaks/shelterbelts are a row or rows of trees or shrubs used to reduce wind erosion, protect young crops, and control blowing snow. These practices also provide excellent protection for wildlife, livestock, houses, and farm buildings. Field windbreaks are similar to shelterbelts but are located along field borders or within the field.

Contour grass strips are narrow bands of perennial vegetation cover planted on the contour in a crop field and alternate down the slope with strips of crops. Contour strips can reduce soil erosion, can minimize transport of sediment and other water-borne contaminants, and improve wildlife habitat.

Riparian buffers are plantings of trees, shrubs, and grasses that catch pollutants in both surface runoff and ground water before those pollutants reach a water body, such as a stream or lake. Riparian buffers also improve fish and wildlife habitat.

Conservation buffers work economically because they are generally less expensive to install than practices that require extensive engineering and costly construction methods. Buffers also tend to be more economical to maintain than many other practices. There are financial incentives under the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign-up that make use of certain buffers more attractive economically than ever before. You can sign up any day at your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service Center (Farm Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service). There is no waiting period with the continuous CRP sign-up, and you need not compete against others to see who gets in. Your offer is automatically accepted if you meet the eligibility requirements.

Consider how a buffer strip would fit in your operation.