THE CITY OF ALPHARETTA GEORGIA

CITY OF ALPHARETTA'S Natural Resources Commission
improve. conserve. protect. beautify.

RIPARIAN BUFFER GUIDANCE

Conservation and Revegetation Requirements
for State Waters (Streams, Lakes, Creeks, Etc.)

HOW BUFFERS PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY

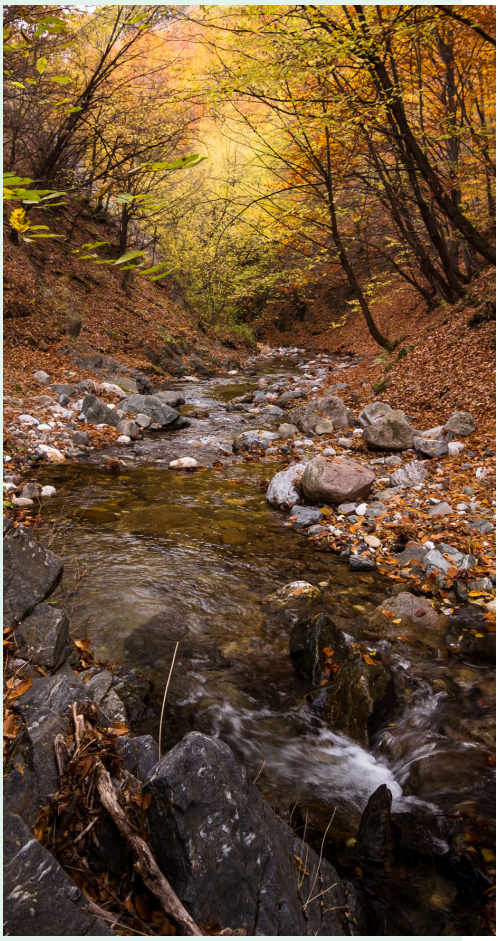
If you have a stream, lake, ditch or other water body on your property, there are many reasons to protect, preserve, and enhance the buffer zone around it. Buffers are critical on water bodies of all sizes. Many residential areas are built around small streams which feed larger streams and rivers and eventually reach drinking water intakes. Preserving buffers on these streams, no matter the size, not only protects these surface waters but also allows water to percolate through the soil and replenish groundwater.

Without buffers, homes and residential neighborhoods can contribute sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, metals, oil and other vehicle fluids, pet waste and many other pollutants to nearby waters, which may eventually end up in our drinking water plants. Buffers also help prevent property loss due to erosion.

WHAT IS A RIPARIAN BUFFER?

A State Waters Buffer or Riparian Buffer is the strip of natural vegetation, usually forested, along the bank of a stream, lake or other water body that helps shade and separates the water from developed areas such as lawns, buildings, roads, driveways, etc. Buffers can include native grasses, shrubs, trees, and groundcover which hold the soil in place and act as living filters of pollution.

IF YOU NEED TO ENCROACH INTO THE BUFFERS FOR ANY REASON PLEASE CONTACT THE CITY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRIOR TO BEGINNING ANY WORK TO RECEIVE GUIDANCE AND APPROVALS.



For more information or please contact the City of Alpharetta Department of Community Development:

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR STATE WATER BUFFERS

Within the City of Alpharetta, State Water buffers range in size from twenty five (25) feet to one hundred fifty (150) feet and shall be preserved in their natural undisturbed state. When these buffers are disturbed or sparsely planted they shall be enhanced with additional plant material. Enhancement plants must provide an opaque screen within two (2) years of planting and must consist of trees, shrubs, and groundcover plants meeting the following standards:

- Replacement plantings must be native and be arranged to have a natural appearance;
- Plant selection will consist of:
  - No more than twenty five percent (25%) of any genus;
  - Eighty percent (80%) evergreen and twenty percent (20%) deciduous;
  - Evergreen trees species shall be a minimum of 9 feet tall at time of installation;
  - Deciduous tree species shall be a minimum of 2 inch caliper at time of installation;
  - Shrubs must be a minimum of 3 feet tall at time of installation;
  - Groundcovers shall consist of ferns, perennial flowering, perennial herbs, grasses, sedges, creeping plants, trailing plants, etc.
- Plants shall be spaced a maximum of eight (8) feet on center or as approved by the Director;
- Plantings shall be designed with plant palate containing a mixture of colors, textures, and heights.

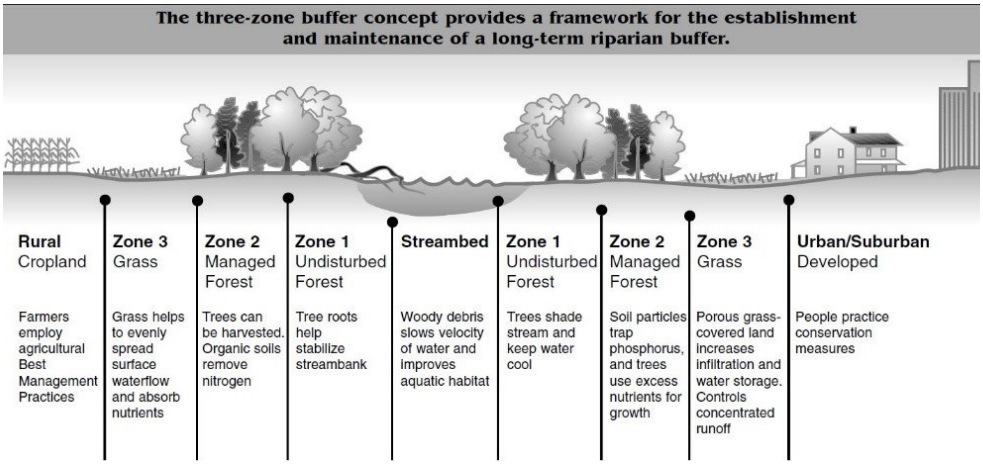

Image From: http://extension.umd.edu/sites/extension.umd.edu/files/_docs/programs/riparianbuffers/FS724.pdf

Additional Resources

- Backyard Buffers: http://www.dca.state.ga.us/development/environmentalmanagement/programs/downloads/dcabackyardbuffers.pdf
- Protecting Georgia's Surface Water Resources: http://extension.uga.edu/publications/detail.html?number=B1217
- Native Plants of Georgia a photo guide for plant enthusiasts: https://secure.caes.uga.edu/extension/publications/files/pdf/B%201339_3.PDF
- Field Guide for Determining the Presence of State Waters that Require a Buffer: http://epd.georgia.gov/sites/epd.georgia.gov/files/related_files/site_page/Brochure%20for%20State%20Waters%20Guidance%204-5-17.pdf
- EPD Buffer Variance Applications: https://epd.georgia.gov/erosion-and-sedimentation-forms