




SUGGESTIONS FOR GOOD STEWARDSHIP OF YOUR STREAM-SIDE PROPERTY
How to create a buffer which provides for the health of the waterway, the stability of your stream-bank, and a habitat corridor for wildlife.


In general, a three-zone buffer of about 100 feet is needed for good stream protection. In regions with steep slopes, a wider buffer may be needed.

 The first zone starts at the stream bank, is approximately 15 feet wide and consists of undisturbed forest with trees and woody shrubs that stabilize the bank and provide shade and nutrients. Some stream banks already have such vegetation, creating a good foundation for improvement. Bare-root, potted, or burlapped and balled native shrubs may need to be planted initially. Maintenance is limited to watering during periods of drought, eradication of invasive plants, and removal of litter. Logging, mowing and pruning of native species should not occur. Livestock should be excluded and no foot trails should be created in this zone other than those which are perpendicular to the creek.

 The second zone is about 60 feet wide and consists of managed forest with trees and shrubs. It provides protective buffering and filtering functions, and in water overflow conditions extends the contact time to help prevent a concentrated flow. Pruning or harvesting of trees may occur according to an approved forest management plan. A foot or (non-motorized) bike trail may be created in this zone, if desired.

 The third zone is about 20 feet wide, and consists of a dense herbaceous cover of native grasses, broad-leafed plants, or, less ideally, woodland. The grasses should be allowed to mature before mowing for hay. This zone helps to convert a concentrated flow in flood conditions to “sheet” flow and to allow for even more efficient filtering effect and nutrient preservation.

A few points to remember:

 Sometimes, good stewardship means nothing more than leaving the existing vegetative cover and checking for invasives.

 Native Plants not only require less maintenance, but they are bound into the life-cycles of local wildlife, and help to promote our regional biological diversity.

 Habits on the rest of your property affect the quality of the run-off into the waterways, too. Don't over-fertilize or use toxic chemicals which may wash into the creek.

If you would like more information, please contact us, and we will be glad to talk with you.