

FWG – RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

February 2023 Meeting

Here to talk to you about Forestry-Related Resource Improvement Practices:

- RI-9 (Forest Buffer: Exclusion Area on Watercourse), and
- RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse)

And to ask the following questions:

- Are RI practices 9 and 10 equivalent to the CBP BMPs Forest Buffer with Exclusion Fencing and Riparian Forest Buffer?
- Does the FWG have the ability to alter the Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verification Visual Indicators Report as the practices in question pertain to forestry (report originally approved through the AgWG)?

If the answers to the questions below are yes, **can the credit duration of 10 years be extended to 15 years per the “Proposed Credit Duration for Forestry BMPs” proposal approved by the WQGIT?**

What are Resource Improvement Practices?

- Practices that were established in the AgWG [Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verification Visual Indicators Report in 2014](#).
- These practices were meant to allow practices that were being implemented without Federal or State financial assistance (public cost-share) to be reported through developing criteria and a definition, along with verification protocols.
 - RI practices are non-cost shared BMPs that are financed by the operator or other non-public entity or source and may or may not meet the practice standards associated with federal and state cost-share programs.

Why Is It Important To Report Non Cost shared BMP's?

- ◆ **Farmers and Agricultural Landowners** voluntarily install many BMP's outside of state or federal cost share programs or cannot accept a government subsidy:
 - ✓ Plain Sect Farmers (Amish, Mennonite Farmers as examples)
 - ✓ Farms owned by corporations that cannot accept federal funding due to the payment limitations.
- ◆ **Some state nutrient regulations** require farmers to install practices that provide water quality protection and need to be verified for compliance with state laws. These state requirements may result in practices that are not required to meet NRCS Standards and Specifications:
 - ✓ Stream Exclusion (fencing type or distance from stream)
 - ✓ 10' and 35' buffers for fertilizer and manure application setbacks
- ◆ **Watershed Organizations, Environmental Organizations, Conservation Organizations, and NGOs** are all helping Farmers and Agricultural Landowners to meet WIP goals to protect water quality by installing BMPs:
 - ✓ Shenandoah RC&D Council - Stream exclusion fencing with narrow width tree plantings
 - ✓ Nanticoke Watershed Alliance – 10' Buffers on Drainage Ditches
 - ✓ Chester River Association - Switch grass plantings for field buffers
 - ✓ Mid-Shore Riverkeeper Conservancy - Water Control Structures on Field Ditches

Which states report RI Practices (As of 2021 Progress)?

- RI-9 (Forest Buffer: Exclusion Area on Watercourse), and
- RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse)

Virginia

Forest Buffer on
Watercourse RI

221,745 FEET

Pennsylvania

Forest Buffer on Watercourse
RI

4800 Feet

Maryland

Forest Buffer on Watercourse
RI

34,177 Feet

How are these practices currently counted in CAST?

- In the BMP Summary Report, these practices (if counted) are included in the total for forest buffers and forest buffers with exclusion fencing.

The definition of RI-9 and RI-10

Put simply the definitions are:

- RI-9 (Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse) = 10'-34' width exclusion area.
- RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse) = 35'+ width buffer.

These practices are defined as *“predominantly trees and/or shrubs established on converted cropland located adjacent to and up-gradient from streams, ditches or tidal waters to create an exclusion area, reduce excess amounts of sediment, organic material, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants in surface runoff adjacent to streams”*.

RI-9 and 10 can only qualify if applied on stable areas next to streams, ditches or tidal waters. And **can only be reported to converted cropland without a fence.**

The criteria for RI-9 and RI-10

The visual indicators for these practices (checklist that must be met) is the following:

- 1) Dominant vegetation (>50% canopy cover) consists of existing naturally regenerated or planted trees/shrubs.
- 2) Perpendicular distance from top-of-bank of stream, ditch or tidal area > or equal to 10 ft minimum buffer width.
- 3) Overland/sheet flow through buffer maximized (no concentrated flow)
- 4) Structural measures are present where vegetation practice is insufficient to control erosion.

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