

Chesapeake Bay Riparian Forest Buffer Initiative

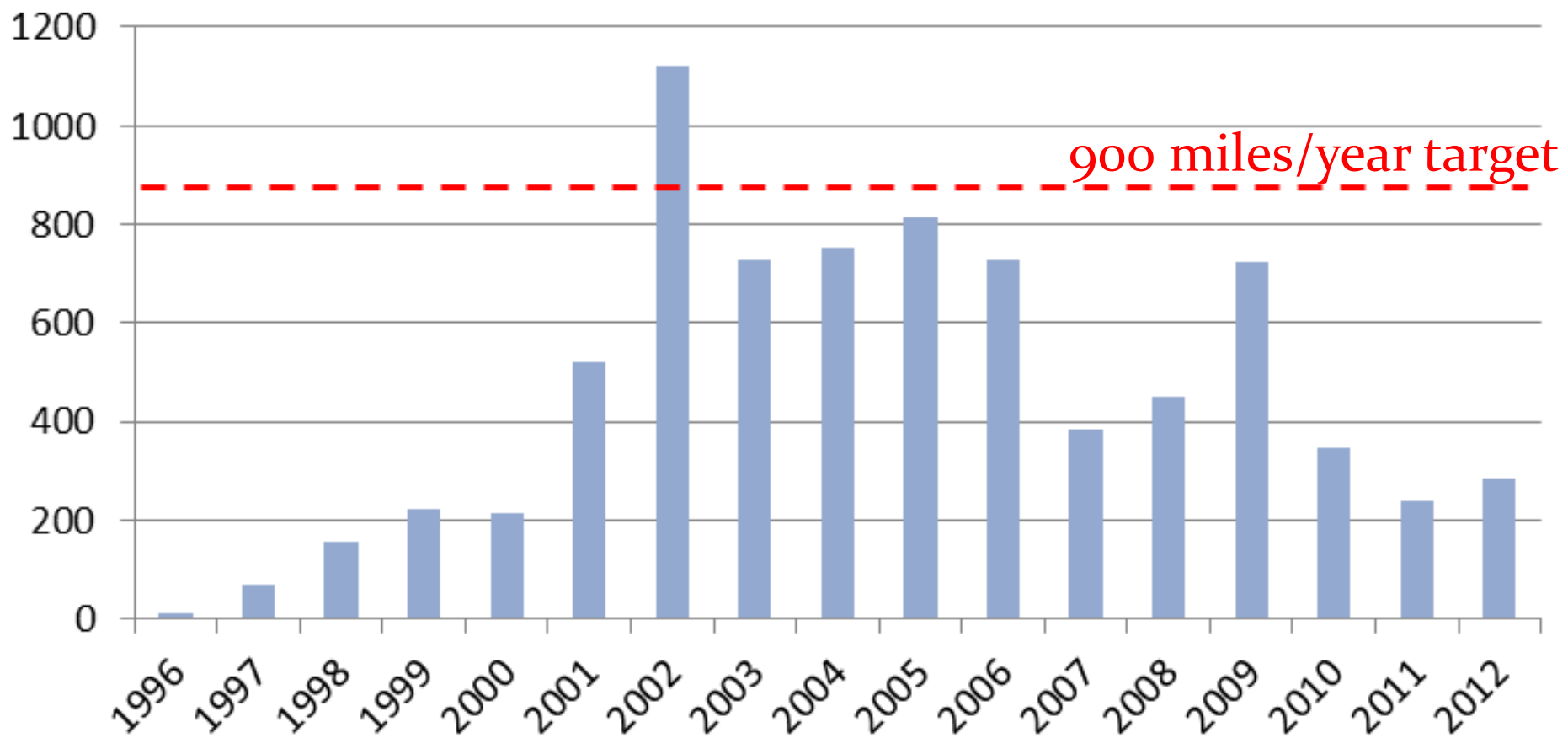
Recommendations the VA State Task Force

Task Force Objectives

- ❖ Identify the network of partners supporting riparian forest buffer implementation in the State.
- ❖ Make prompt reforms to existing Federal-State programs
- ❖ Lay the groundwork for any needed longer-term program or procedural changes.
- ❖ Identify regional or national level issues
- ❖ Prepare a report, including list of recommendations and implementing strategies -- request for funding

Past Progress – Miles Reported by States

Miles of Riparian Forest Buffers Planted in Chesapeake Bay Watershed, 1996-2012



Data source: US Forest Service/Chesapeake Bay Program



Key Considerations

- 1) Program Leadership
- 2) Guidance Policies
- 3) Outreach and Maintenance
- 4) Compliance and Re-enrollment
- 5) Technical Assistance Delivery
- 6) Incentives (federal/state/private)

Drivers

- Field staff promote the practice
- Positive past experience with program/staff
- Doing the right thing
- Habitat improvement
- Protect farm streams
- Financial gain
- Increased property value and return on investment
- Program requirement

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Barriers

- Lack of capital
- Cost-share caps, maximums, are too low
- Land rental rates not high enough
- Cumbersome sign-up process
- Length of contract period
- Having a choice of a grass buffer
- Consumes [production] acreage
- Loss of lease revenue

Barriers (continued)

- Perceived [low] success rate of forest buffers – trashy look
- Improper species selection because of policies
- Lack of labor and equipment [for participant to implement practice]
- Dislike of reforesting open land
- Inconsistencies in administrative and programmatic policies between local, state, and federal programs
- Availability of trained technical assistance
- Lack of clear priority for riparian forest buffers
- Fear - anti-government attitude

Opportunities/Solutions

- Technical recommendations and guidance
- Program policies and incentives
- Outreach, marketing, and partnerships
- Recommendation for policy changes outside the purview of the State leaders

Technical Recommendations

- Greater **flexibility** in technical recommendations for establishment and management
- Review/Update tree planting ‘prescriptions’
- Review of **NRCS standards**
- Mowing
- Increase capacity for trained **technical assistance**
- Establish clear **priority** for forest buffers
- Focus on permanent land use change to **retain** buffers



08/04/2015

WEED MANAGEMENT IN RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFERS

[illegible]

This is especially true where RFBs are established in existing cool-season grass pastures or hay fields (the 'green

Effective weed control reduces competition for tree growth), reduces cover for pests such as moths and makes it easier to properly inspect the trees and tree shelters.

Control Weeds Before Planting

Control Weeds Before Planting

The best time to begin your weed control program is the
 - before the RFB is planted (two would be even better).
 - in the fall prior to a spring



Figure 1 may arise from a combination of multiple causes, possibly including the following:

Evaluation of Tree Seedling Mortality and Protective Strategies in Riparian Forest Restoration

William S. Keeton



Hardwood Plantation Establishment in Old Fescue-Filled Pastures

by Vernon "Tad" Norris

Kentucky's landowners have planted many acres of hardwood trees in recent years, but statewide results have been disappointing. To ensure success, certain issues must be addressed well before any roots are covered. **Hardwood planting often occurs in fescue fields, and planting in these abandoned pastures creates several challenges. The following recommendation provides one proven approach to deal with planting in these old fields.**

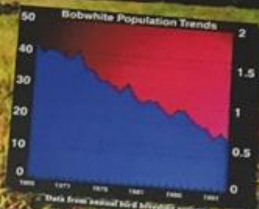
Often times when hardwoods are planted into fescue, the fescue winds up out competing the tree seedlings. The denser the fescue is, the worse it is. If you have fescue, try

inside of the plant, neither will the herbicide. We are thus limited to a cool-season spraying.

Go ahead and acquire your herbicide in January this will give you almost enough time—if you're like me—to understand the label. You might also contact your forester, county Extension agent, or local progressive farmer to get any remaining questions answered. Simpler is better, and using more chemical than is recommended doesn't mean you will get better results.

Start checking the area by mid-March. Look for

Handling The Fescue Problem



THE GRAPH ABOVE SHOWS AN ALL TOO FAMILIAR scene of bobwhite quail restoration.

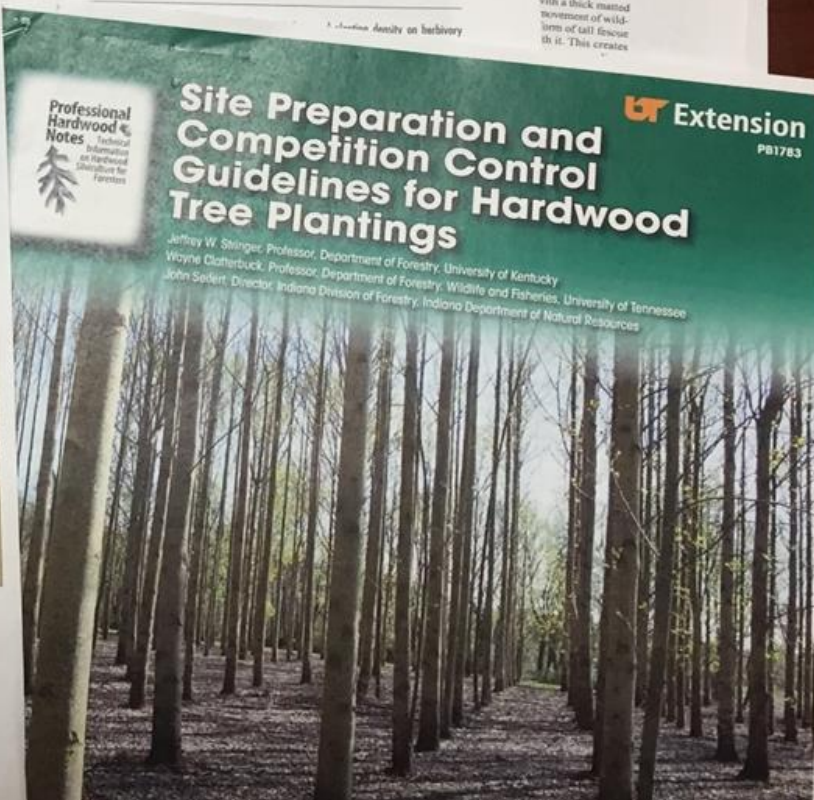
Sole and Put Key

the predominant cover and erosion control in the southwestern U.S. There is a lack of data on the use of tall fescue across the country. Tall fescue provides poor quality habitat for many native and introduced wildlife species, and is a poor habitat for many native and introduced wildlife species, and is a poor habitat for many native and introduced wildlife species.

it fescue is a poor competitive plant it has been established with a thick matted movement of wild-orn of tall fescue th it. This creates

Site Preparation and Competition Control Guidelines for Hardwood Tree Plantings

Jeffrey W. Stinger, Professor, Department of Forestry, University of Kentucky
Wayne Clatterbuck, Professor, Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries, University of Tennessee
John Seibert, Director, Indiana Division of Forestry, Indiana Department of Natural Resources



NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD

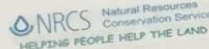
RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFER
(Ac.)

CODE 391

DEFINITION

An area predominantly trees and/or shrubs located adjacent to and up-gradient from watercourses or water bodies.

Dominant vegetation will consist of existing, naturally regenerated, or seeded/planted trees and shrubs suited to the soil and hydrology of the site and the intended purpose.



Virginia CREP Technical Program Guidance

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible farmers and landowners to protect environmentally sensitive land, decrease erosion, restore wildlife habitat, and safeguard ground and surface water.

Program Overview

In Virginia, the CREP program is offered on a continuous basis for the Chesapeake Bay and Southern Rivers watersheds. Four different CREP practices are eligible for financial assistance to farmers and landowners to address a variety of purposes including soil, water, wildlife and related natural resource concerns on their lands.

- CP21 Filter Strips – Strips of grass used to trap sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants before they reach streams and lakes. Only eligible on cropland.
- CP22 Riparian Forest Buffer – Plantings of trees and shrubs that catch pollutants in both surface and ground water before those pollutants reach a water body. In addition, riparian forest buffers improve fish and wildlife habitat as a secondary consideration. Eligible on cropland and marginal pastureland.
- CP23 Wetland Restoration – Restoring natural hydrologic and vegetative conditions that remove sediment, filter runoff, provide groundwater recharge and storm water control as well as provide food, water and cover for a wide variety of wildlife. Only eligible on cropland.
- CP29 Wildlife Habitat Buffer – Plant native grass and shrub communities to enhance wildlife habitat, remove sediment, and filter nutrients, pesticides, and other pollutants from surface and subsurface flow. Eligible on marginal pastureland.

General Program and Practice Requirements

- Cropland is considered eligible if it meets the following criteria:
 - Producers have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to application
 - Cropping history according to 2-CRP par. 151:
 - 4 of out 6 years between 2008-20013, or
 - 12-year rotation
 - Physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner
 - Marginal Pastureland is considered eligible if it is land that is not cropland or forestland and is capable of containing livestock.
- Buffers that exhibit the natural characteristics that are already in place are not eligible to be enrolled in CREP. For riparian forest buffers, "natural characteristics" means an area that already has approximately 30% canopy closure.
- The landowner is responsible for determining whether or not:



Riparian Forest Buffer
Virginia Conservation Practice Job Sheet

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immediately adjacent and up-gradient of the buffer site.

Use the Virginia Technical Note Forestry #3, Tree and Shrub Establishment Guidelines and the Virginia Plant Establishment Guide located



Virginia Technical Note Forestry #3
"Tree and Shrub Establishment Guidelines"

October 2015

TREE AND SHRUB ESTABLISHMENT GUIDELINES



INTRODUCTION

Planting trees and shrubs successfully takes careful planning and consideration. Not all trees can be planted using the same methods. Special attention is needed for woody plant species. The choice of what to plant depends on the purpose of the planting, the site and the availability of the seed, seedlings, or cuttings. There are many factors to consider, during and after tree and shrub planting which requires attention to several key factors: proper species selection, seedling quality, proper planting technique, and proper control of competing vegetation. A successful establishment depends on these factors.

USDA NRCS Plant Establishment Guide (PEG) at usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx for information about choosing and planting methods, techniques and uses.

See the Soil Survey Interpretations – Woodland Suitability, for Individual Soil Web Soil Survey: ov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm

For more information on Forestry and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, contact the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Technical Recommendations

Virginia's RFB Prescriptions Continue to Evolve

- Site Preparation:
 - OLD - Scalp / mow / graze
 - NEW - Herbicide entire field + companion planting
 - Herbicide strips or circles



Technical Recommendations

- Species Selection:
 - OLD – 80% Hard mast / 20% Other
 - NEW – Forester's recommendation, 3-4 native species,
½ can be pine
 - Size requirement - 3/8" or 18" tall



Technical Recommendations

- Stocking:

- OLD – 110 tpa, sheltered or 300 tpa, up to 200 sheltered
- NEW – 25 whips per acre + natural regeneration
 - 300 tpa, up to 200 sheltered

- Post Planting Establishment:

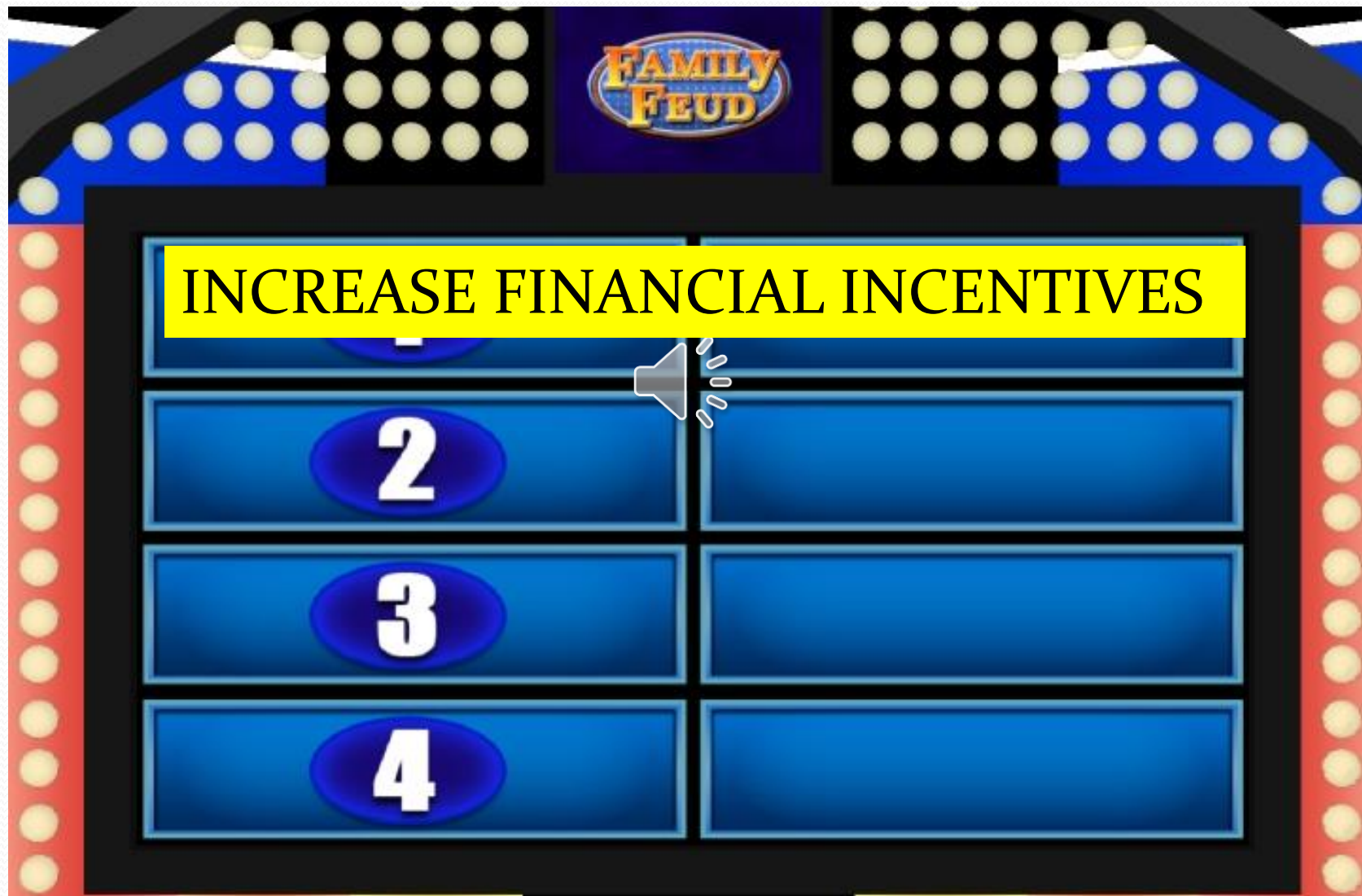
- OLD – Weed mat
- NEW - Entire field herbicide – nothing
 - Strips & circles herbicide – 2 year release work



Opportunities/Solutions

- Technical recommendations and guidance
- Program policies and incentives
- Outreach, marketing, and partnerships
- Recommendation for policy changes outside the purview of the State leaders

Survey Says...



Program Policies and Incentives

- Boost financial incentives and CREP rental rates to ‘outcompete’ other program offerings
 - SIP, Cost-Share, Rental Payments
- Establish clear priority for forest buffers through financial incentives
- Increase State contributions for RFB
 - exclusion + CP-22 to achieve 100% reimbursement
- Make CREP signup less cumbersome
- Update technical policies (i.e. 80/20)
- Crack down on noncompliance

National Policy Changes

- Increased cost-share caps for components ~10%
- Increased maintenance rate - \$5/acre to \$10/acre
- Updated cropland SRR - 2015

State Policy Changes

- Increased State (DCR) c/s for CP-22
 - 25% to 50%
- Abolished “80/20” rule
- NRCS/DOF certification for cost-share
- PIP distributed after tree establishment is affirmed
- Use GIS imagery for compliance spotchecks

Virginia “CREP 2.0”

- Increase CREP rental rate (cropland and MPL)
 - Abolish rental rate cap of \$95/acre
- Increase acreage enrollment ceiling
- Add a section to capture uses of \$1M award!
 - New CP-22 incentive

Average Buffer Width	Incentive Payment
35'	\$100/acre
35' – 50'	\$150/acre
50' – 100'	\$200/acre
100' – 300'	\$300/acre

- Allow limited local authority for c/s cap waivers:

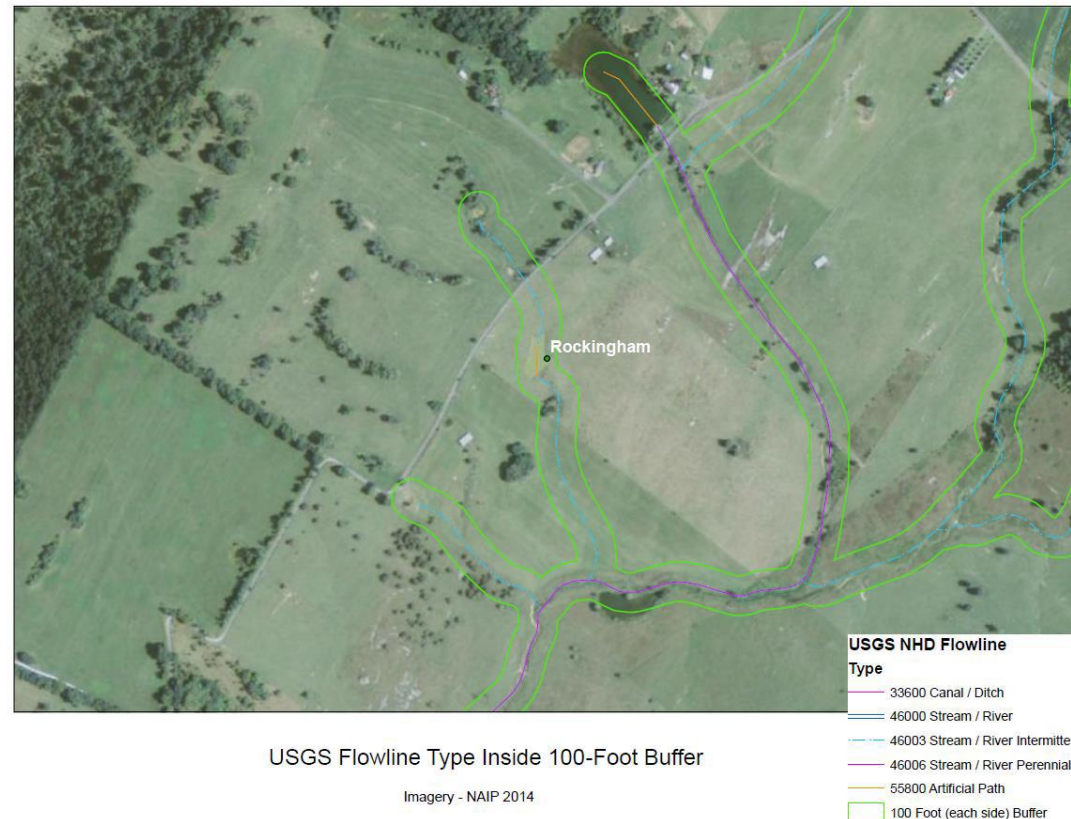
Reviewing Authority	Waiver Amount
COC	Up to \$5,000
STC	\$5,001 - \$10,000
DAFP	Over \$10,000

Outreach, Marketing, Partnerships

- Establish clear priority for forest buffers through targeting
- Set goals for implementing forest buffers
- Provide joint training for partners
- Staffing:
 - partnership positions? Dedicated staff/teams?
 - Technical Assistance – NRCS? DOF? SWCD?
- Recognition for landowners who adopt forest buffers

Targeted Outreach

- ID acres where an RFB is needed
 - Engage with land managers
- FSA mailings
- Partner efforts



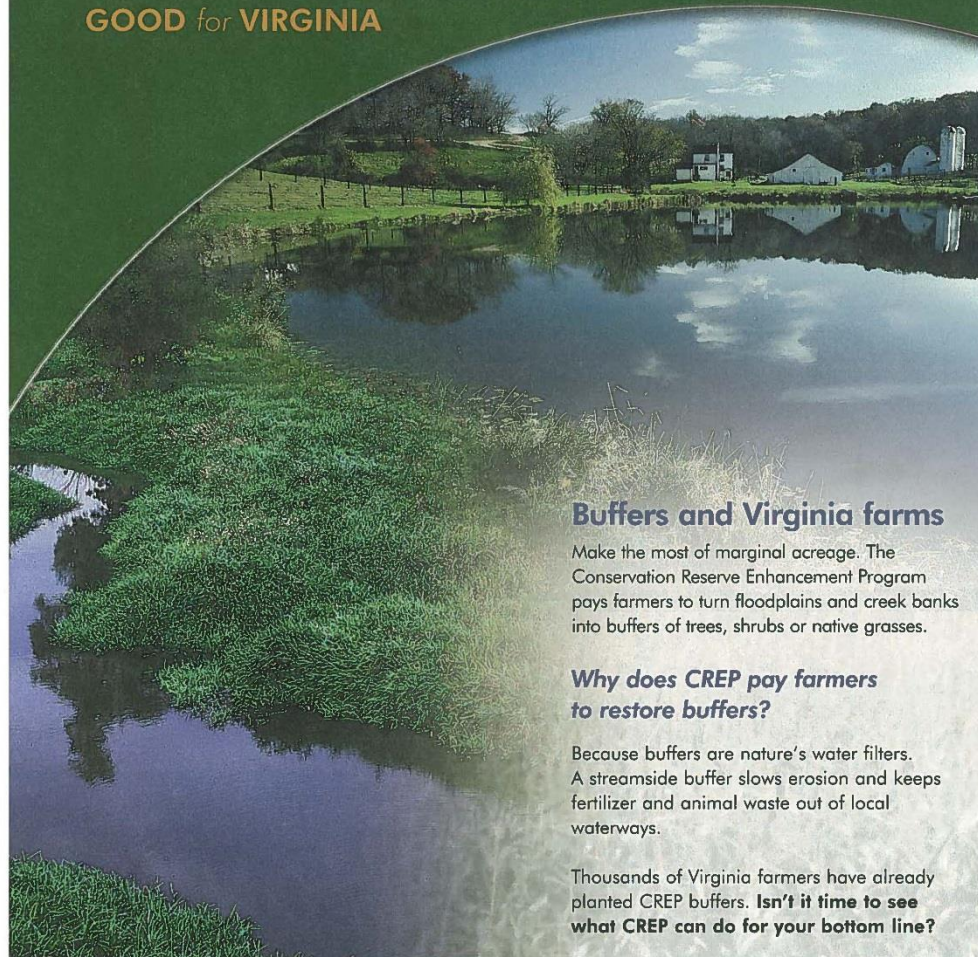
Partner Coordination

- Dedicated Staff
- USFS Grant
- Joint Training
- Local Working Groups
- QA/QC field reviews
- Landowner Recognition



CREP Buffers

GOOD for YOUR BOTTOM LINE
GOOD for VIRGINIA



Buffers and Virginia farms

Make the most of marginal acreage. The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program pays farmers to turn floodplains and creek banks into buffers of trees, shrubs or native grasses.

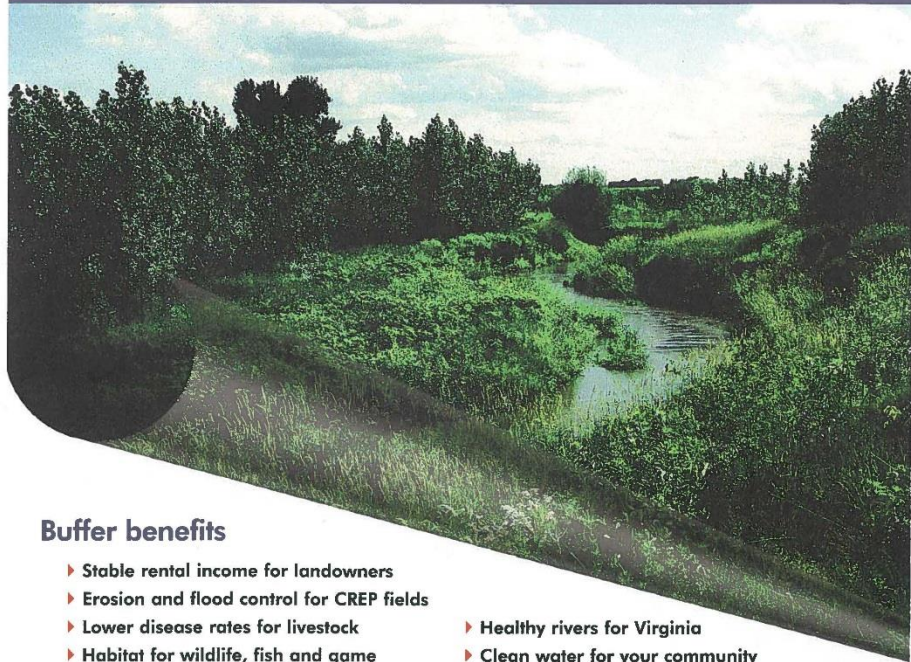
Why does CREP pay farmers to restore buffers?

Because buffers are nature's water filters. A streamside buffer slows erosion and keeps fertilizer and animal waste out of local waterways.

Thousands of Virginia farmers have already planted CREP buffers. **Isn't it time to see what CREP can do for your bottom line?**

Farm the Best. Buffer the Rest.

CREP WORKS for YOU



Buffer benefits

- ▶ Stable rental income for landowners
- ▶ Erosion and flood control for CREP fields
- ▶ Lower disease rates for livestock
- ▶ Habitat for wildlife, fish and game
- ▶ Healthy rivers for Virginia
- ▶ Clean water for your community

Buffers and your bottom line

CREP is a state-federal partnership that makes it easy for Virginia farmers to do their part to protect our waterways. CREP incentives, cost-share reimbursements and payments make sure buffers don't hurt a farmer's bottom line. In fact, annual rental payments of up to \$100 per acre make buffers an excellent investment.

Unlike conventional crops, a buffer of trees or native grasses only has to be planted once and requires minimal upkeep during a 10- or 15-year CREP contract. There are even incentives to help farmers install fences and watering troughs. CREP farmers agree to maintain buffers, but retain their property rights. That leaves the land open to hunting, fishing and other recreational activities. That's a good thing, because buffers are prime wildlife habitat.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program



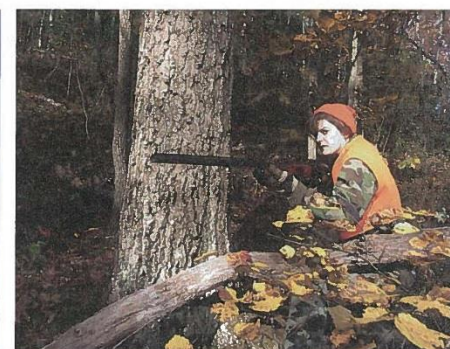
“CREP is good for water quality, wildlife and my farm's bottom line... Any way you look at it, CREP is a win-win situation.”

— Essex farmer Robert Gibson



FARM SMARTER, NOT HARDER

- ▶ **Don't waste time and gasoline.** Use buffers to reshape your fields for efficient tractor coverage.
- ▶ **Don't waste seed in muddy floodplains.** Get paid to use those areas as buffers instead.
- ▶ **Don't risk your livestock.** Give them clean, reliable watering sources.
- ▶ **Don't miss out on hunting season.** Increase wildlife habitat by restoring buffers and get premium hunt-lease income.
- ▶ **Don't delay.** Act now to take advantage of NEW incentives for wider buffers and optional CREP easements, which protect your land permanently.



Farm the Best. Buffer the Rest.

Find out more at your local Farm Service Center

Interested in learning how CREP can help your bottom line? Contact your local USDA Farm Service Center. CREP is a state-federal partnership, so you can sign up with NRCS, FSA or your local Soil and Water Conservation District.

To find your local Farm Service Center, phone the Virginia FSA office at (804) 287-1546 or call DCR toll free at (877) 42-WATER.

CREP partners will explain the program details and tell you about cost-share reimbursements for plantings, fencing and other Best Management Practices. An NRCS representative will visit your farm to tell you how many acres qualify for CREP and explain how a buffer can make your farm more efficient.

CREP makes it easy for Virginia farmers to do their part to protect our streams and rivers—find out just how easy today.



- ▶ Ask about **NEW incentives** for 100-foot-wide buffers, restored wetlands and conservation easements!













February 25, 2016

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