

Streamside Buffering

Native vegetative buffers or “riparian bands” serve as a protective barrier between potentially harmful materials such as eroded soil or surface contaminants and the water itself- be it a stream, pond, swamp or lake. In turn, the vegetative buffer can become a rich habitat for a myriad of animal and beneficial insect life. The naturally occurring plants can include trees, shrubs and tall, coarse grasses. Landowners with water features on their property can significantly contribute to enhanced water quality by leaving natural buffers in place or embarking on a restoration of an unbuffered area. During monitoring trips of conservation easements we regularly see streams and ponds with lawn running directly to the water’s edge. Whatever fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides are used to keep the lawn lush and weed-free are also having unfettered access to the water body. Water travels indiscriminately so these chemicals can easily spread beyond the treated area and enter larger bodies of water, wells and the entire aquifer. The benefits of water feature buffering cannot be underestimated in terms of protecting our communities -ecologically and economically. We recommend, for starters, a visit to the Northwest Conservation District website @ www.conservect.org/northwest and a trip to their annual plant sale at the Goshen fairgrounds.