# Riparian Forest Buffer

## Goal

Continually increase the capacity of forest buffers to provide water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed. Restore 900 miles per year of riparian forest buffer and conserve existing buffers until at least 70 percent of riparian areas throughout the watershed are forested.

Agricultural forest buffers receive the most attention since they prevent more N, P and sediment from entering the waterways than urban forest buffers or any type of grass buffer. There are good agricultural forest buffer planting cost-share programs in place. These programs need to be maximized. Complementary programs that encourage forest buffers also need to be implemented.

Most factors affecting the RFB Management Strategy relate to difficulties in delivering existing programs. Some factors are more technical, or relate to the need for strengthened management/leadership. Other factors exist because of the many demands on riparian land, rendering it unfit for riparian forest establishment. Watershed-wide restoration, conservation, and maintenance/stewardship services are consistently needed in order to increase the amount of riparian forest buffers in the watershed. Strong leadership and funding helps to facilitate this.

## Resulting Scoring Narrative

The complexity of factors require best professional judgement (BPJ) to discern the differences between some scores. For instance, multiple different combinations of practice effects could lead to judgments that a 4 is warranted instead of a 3 or 5.



Option 2

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| **Score** | **Score Narrative for Riparian Forest Buffer** |
| 5 Substantial Improvement | Directly improves the practice, protection, and/or maintenance of riparian forest buffers (35’ or wider). |
| 4 Moderate to Substantial Improvement | Somewhere between 3 and 5 🡪 BPJ |
| 3 Moderate Improvement | Facilitates the practice, protection, and/or maintenance of riparian forest buffers. |
| 2 Slight to Moderate Improvement | Somewhere between 1 and 3 🡪 BPJ |
| 1 Slight Improvement | Potential to directly improve the restoration, maintenance, or conservation of riparian forest buffers, or their functionality. |
| 0 No Effect | Practice has no impact on riparian forest buffers. |
| -1 Slight Worsening | Potential to directly impact the restoration, maintenance, or conservation of riparian forest buffers, or their functionality. |
| - 2 Slight to Moderate Worsening | Somewhere between -1 and -3 🡪 BPJ |
| - 3 Moderate Worsening | Indirectly impacts the restoration, maintenance, or conservation of riparian forest buffers, or their functionality.  . |
| - 4 Moderate to Substantial Worsening | Somewhere between -3 and -5 🡪 BPJ |
| - 5 Substantial Worsening | Practice directly impacts the restoration, maintenance, or conservation of riparian forest buffers, or their functionality. |