

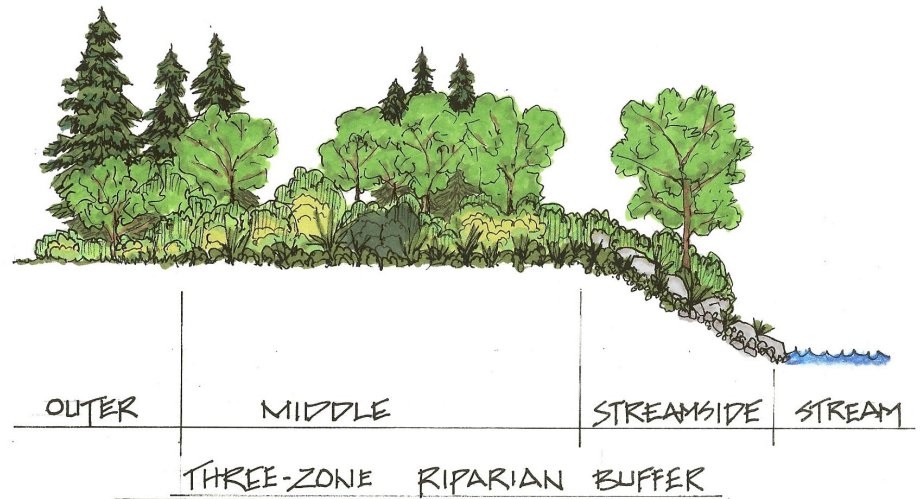
PROTECTING THE WATER'S EDGE

The health of our waterways is determined by how we treat the land that drains into them. All residents, especially those who own and manage lake- or river-front land, can take steps to impact the river in a way that is beneficial to it and the wildlife that depends on it.

A riparian zone is the water's edge, or where the land meets a waterway. Riparian zones act as a buffer for rivers and other waters by filtering out polluted runoff from agricultural, urban, residential or other land uses. Riparian buffers, whether they're planted with deep-rooted native plants or occur naturally with existing trees and woody plants, can absorb sediments, chemical nutrients, and other substances contained in polluted runoff before they enter our rivers and streams. They also slow down the velocity of runoff and infiltrate runoff to recharge groundwater. A healthy, functioning riparian area and associated uplands can dramatically increase the health of fish and wildlife habitat, aid in erosion and foliage control, late season stream flow, and water quality.

What Can YOU Do to Protect the Water Edge?

By creating a healthy riparian zone on your property, you can help improve water quality.



Reduce Turf Grass: Shoreline and stream bank property planted with turf grass is really an unnatural landscape. While turf grasses slow runoff, their root systems are too shallow to stabilize stream banks or shorelines.

Don't Mow to the Water's Edge: Lawns mowed to the water's edge will do little to control shoreline erosion. In fact, removing native vegetation and replacing it with turf grass usually results in accelerated stream bank and shoreline erosion that degrades water quality. A buffer between 15-25 feet is usually suitable, but the more the better.

Plant Native Michigan Plants: Native plants actually help improve water quality and they're an attractive alternative to turf grass. Native plants generally have deeper roots that absorb runoff and break down pollutants that would otherwise go straight to the river. You can usually find native plants at your local nursery.

