

## **Buffer and Wetland Plantings**

Forested buffers, between land and water, are an essential part of the ecosystem. Reforestation programs attempt to preserve and restore forested buffers. In areas all over the country, volunteers, community groups, and state and local conservation groups have initiated buffer planting efforts. By planting indigenous species, the natural functions of riverine buffers and wetlands can be restored, including storm water filtration, nutrient uptake, sediment removal, and peak flow attenuation

### **Check with the government**

When beginning a wetland planting, it is important to keep in mind that any entity that alters a wetland must first get a permit from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. This requirement is specified under the Clean Water Act, Section 404.

### **Partner with other agencies**

Contact your local Cooperative Extension, Soil and Water Conservation District, and Natural Resource Conservation Service for expertise and possible cost-sharing. In addition, contact the NC Ecosystem Enhancement Program. These agencies may be an excellent source of information for possible sites.

### **Identify possible sites**

Gather information from municipal departments, local natural resource professionals, and the community to determine where buffer restoration and wetland plantings might be appropriate. Include such information as park improvement, neighborhood beautification, and future development in your information search. Determine and compare municipal and community priorities.

### **Conduct a feasibility study**

Conduct a feasibility study to ensure the success of the tree planting. Each site has unique soil and other environmental characteristics that must be considered when selecting tree species to be planted. Develop a timetable for planting, depending on program priorities, site conditions, and the availability of materials and labor. Program costs include project organization, site selection, site preparation, supplies, maintenance, volunteer recruitment and organization.

### **Who Can Help?**

With the variety of tasks involved in tree planting efforts, everyone can help out. Pushing wheelbarrows, hauling plants, and shoveling soil, as well as many less-strenuous efforts, such as raking mulch or marking newly planted trees all need to be accomplished. To maintain a steady supply of trees, some organizations establish small nurseries where volunteers can pot seedlings and care for them until they are ready to be transplanted to a natural setting. Other participants in a tree planting program might be responsible for contacting local businesses, residences, or nursery farms to seek financial or vegetative donations, as well as refreshments!

### **Marketing, partnerships, and the media**

Buffer plantings can educate the greater community through media coverage and publicity efforts. Advertise the program and let service groups know about planting project opportunities. Ads can be placed in newsletters, newspapers, and utility bill inserts or posted on the municipal web site. Also, public service announcements can be distributed to radio and television stations. The coordinator can solicit known service groups, environmental organizations, schools, and other groups likely to participate. Municipalities can partner with other community and environmental groups to develop a program that relieves the municipality of the burden of organization. Involve groups and community leaders that are skilled in volunteer recruiting as well as advertising, maximizing participation and exposure.

### **Working with Volunteers**

Once volunteers are signed up for an event, distribute information to them, including meeting times, recommendations for clothing and footwear, inclement weather contingencies, and any other pertinent information. This information can be developed into a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list, to post and use in the future. Maximize volunteer safety by providing safety vests and an adequate number of staff members for supervision based on the type of volunteers used.

### **Educate the participants**

Invite experts to the event to discuss the importance of buffers and wetlands and the benefits the project will have for the community. The educational aspect to the community may well outweigh the environmental benefit.

### **Design a maintenance program**

The natural resource agencies involved in your planting project will be able to help you with a maintenance program. Municipal personnel must be educated about buffer maintenance, for example, NOT mowing buffers, which can remove the benefit of the planting. Regular maintenance may be required to identify, deter, and repair vandalism.

### **Recognize volunteers for their work.**

Participation certificates, T-shirts, cups, and other promotional items are always appreciated awards. Local businesses can offer to provide lunch as a donation. Recognize groups briefly at government functions such as council meetings.

For more information, see EPA's reforestation and wetland planting websites at:

[[http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol\\_4.cfm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol_4.cfm)]

[[http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol\\_10.cfm](http://cfpub.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/menuofbmps/invol_10.cfm)]

