

# Streamside Forests

## *Like Money in the Bank*

Trees growing along streams and rivers provide valuable services – all free of charge. Streamside trees and shrubs, called forest buffers, are water filters, shock absorbers and sponges. They help control flooding, protect fisheries, provide wildlife habitat and boost property values.



An example of a forest buffer zone.

The goal of woodlot management in a buffer should be to develop a self-sustaining, uneven stand of mixed trees, shrubs and groundcover.

Paths should be the minimum width needed and should be unpaved or have a porous surface. They should wind around trees and shrubs rather than requiring their removal.

Additional information can be found at [dof.virginia.gov](http://dof.virginia.gov) and [dcr.virginia.gov/soil\\_and\\_water](http://dcr.virginia.gov/soil_and_water)

For information on forestry consultants and information on your county, go to [vdof.virginia.gov](http://vdof.virginia.gov) and click on "manage your forest", or call 434.977.6555.

For information, resources and contacts regarding riparian forest buffers, including forestry, go to [danriver.org](http://danriver.org) and click on buffer icon on the home page.

### Dan River Basin Association

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## YOUR LAND, YOUR FOREST

*Working for You and  
Your Community*

*Undisturbed working forests* provide wildlife habitat, recreation, revenue and jobs, and scenic beauty. Forests help control flooding, protect water quality and quantity, and they clean the air we breathe. Trees along scenic highways are attractive to those who may want to visit, live or start a business in an area.





## It's Your Land ... Keep It!

If you don't have a streamside forest buffer along your cleared land, most likely your creek is sending chunks of your land to the folks downstream. And they aren't giving it back!



Streambank erosion.

To get the maximum benefit from your forest, consider a forest management plan. Contact the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) or a consulting forester for assistance. A **forest management plan**:

- Is built upon the landowner's objectives.
- Provides tree species composition, age, merchantability, growth rate, and wildlife habitat conditions.
- Considers multiple use of the total forest resource. Examples include wildlife habitat development, aesthetics, recreation and timber production.
- Recommends methods of protecting water quality and sensitive natural areas.
- Includes a map showing location of the various timber types, land uses and natural features such as drainages.
- Contains recommendations for sound forest management practices that meet landowner goals, while enhancing natural resources.

## Consulting Foresters Work for Landowners

If you are considering a timber harvest, use the services of a private professional (consulting) forester to:

- Assure that the harvest is in keeping with good long-term management.
- Provide an inventory and determine an estimated value.
- Assist in marketing to buyers to help get the best price.
- Guide the writing of a timber sales contract.
- Monitor and supervise the harvesting according to the contract and laws and regulations.

Most landowners sell timber only once or twice in a lifetime. Make sure that you do it carefully with professional assistance.



Landowners who use a professional forester in their land management activities may gain on average 40% more in revenue than those who do not. Waiting until your stand of trees is mature will also increase the value of your timber.

With forestry experience and skills, a consulting forester helps you manage your land and your trees. Your investment in getting the right person to manage your forest will pay for itself in the long term.

## Examples of Money-Saving Tools for Forest Owners

**Land Use Taxation** lowers local property taxes and requires only a one-year commitment. Valuation for tax purposes is based on the current rural use of the land and not the development potential.

**Agricultural and Forestal Districts** require a minimum of 200 acres. Landowners petition to establish a district and sign voluntary agreements to receive land use taxation and agree not to develop the property for 4-10 years.

**Riparian Buffer Tax Credit** provides for landowners to receive payment for a portion of the value of timber left standing in riparian buffers, the land along waterways, after timber harvesting. The buffer must be left in unharvested forest for 15 years.

**Federal and State Cost-Share Assistance** provides funds for some farm or forest management practices.

**Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** provides assistance to landowners for the costs of installing conservation practices, makes rental payments on areas where practices are installed and provides funding for purchase of conservation easements in buffer areas.

**Conservation Easements** are voluntary agreements between a landowner and qualified conservation organization to keep land in an undeveloped state and can reduce your federal and state tax bills. The VDOF conservation easement program is available for properties of at least 50 acres, at least 75% wooded, with landowner goals for sustainable forest management.

Information on these and other programs can be found at [dof.virginia.gov](http://dof.virginia.gov) and [dcr.virginia.gov/soil\\_and\\_water](http://dcr.virginia.gov/soil_and_water)

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