

FORESTRY RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

March 2023 AgWG Meeting

Here to talk to you about Forestry-Related Resource Improvement Practices:

FWG February 2023 Decision:

The FWG determined Resource Improvement (RI) practices 9: Exclusion Area on Watercourse and 10: Forest Buffer on Watercourse to be functionally equivalent to CBP Riparian Forest Buffers based on the visual indicators published in the CBP Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verifications Visual Indicators Report by the AgWG. The FWG requests that the credit durations for these practices be extended to 15 years to align with previous decisions made by the partnership on the credit durations of tree practices.

What are Resource Improvement Practices?

- Practices that were established in the AgWG [Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verification Visual Indicators Report in 2014.](#)
- These practices were meant to allow practices that were being implemented without Federal or State financial assistance (public cost-share) to be reported through developing criteria and a definition, along with verification protocols.
 - RI practices are non-cost shared BMPs that are financed by the operator or other non-public entity or source and may or may not meet the practice standards associated with federal and state cost-share programs.

Why Is It Important To Report Non Cost shared BMP's?

- ◆ **Farmers and Agricultural Landowners** voluntarily install many BMP's outside of state or federal cost share programs or cannot accept a government subsidy:
 - ✓ Plain Sect Farmers (Amish, Mennonite Farmers as examples)
 - ✓ Farms owned by corporations that cannot accept federal funding due to the payment limitations.
- ◆ **Some state nutrient regulations** require farmers to install practices that provide water quality protection and need to be verified for compliance with state laws. These state requirements may result in practices that are not required to meet NRCS Standards and Specifications:
 - ✓ Stream Exclusion (fencing type or distance from stream)
 - ✓ 10' and 35' buffers for fertilizer and manure application setbacks
- ◆ **Watershed Organizations, Environmental Organizations, Conservation Organizations, and NGOs** are all helping Farmers and Agricultural Landowners to meet WIP goals to protect water quality by installing BMPs:
 - ✓ Shenandoah RC&D Council - Stream exclusion fencing with narrow width tree plantings
 - ✓ Nanticoke Watershed Alliance – 10' Buffers on Drainage Ditches
 - ✓ Chester River Association - Switch grass plantings for field buffers
 - ✓ Mid-Shore Riverkeeper Conservancy - Water Control Structures on Field Ditches

Which states report RI Practices (As of 2021 Progress)?

- RI-9 (Forest Buffer: Exclusion Area on Watercourse), ft, and
- RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse), ft

1. Virginia
2. Maryland
3. Pennsylvania

How are these practices currently counted in CAST?

- In the BMP Summary Report, these practices (if counted) are included in the total for forest buffers and forest buffers on fenced pasture corridor.
 - Both of these practices have 15 year credit durations.

Forest Buffers	cumulative	Acres in Buffers
Narrow Forest Buffers	cumulative	Acres in Buffers
Forest Buffers on Fenced Pasture Corridor	cumulative	Acres in Buffers
Narrow Forest Buffers on Fenced Pasture Corridor	cumulative	Acres in Buffers
Total Forest Buffers	cumulative	Acres in Buffers

The definition of RI-9 and RI-10

Put simply the definitions are:

- RI-9 (Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse) = 10'-34' width exclusion area.
- RI-10 (Forest Buffer on Watercourse) = 35'+ width buffer.

These practices are defined as *“predominantly trees and/or shrubs established on converted cropland located adjacent to and up-gradient from streams, ditches or tidal waters to create an exclusion area, reduce excess amounts of sediment, organic material, nutrients, pesticides and other pollutants in surface runoff adjacent to streams”*.

RI-9 and 10 can only qualify if applied on stable areas next to streams, ditches or tidal waters. And **can only be reported to converted cropland without a fence.**

The criteria for RI-9 and RI-10

The visual indicators for these practices (checklist that must be met) is the following:

- 1) Dominant vegetation (>50% canopy cover) consists of existing naturally regenerated or planted trees/shrubs.
- 2) Perpendicular distance from top-of-bank of stream, ditch or tidal area > or equal to 10 ft minimum buffer width.
- 3) Overland/sheet flow through buffer maximized (no concentrated flow)
- 4) Structural measures are present where vegetation practice is insufficient to control erosion.

Request to the AgWG

Does the AgWG support the extension of credit durations of RI-09: Exclusion Area on Watercourse and RI-10: Forest Buffer on Watercourse from 10 to 15 years through the inclusion of these practices into the FWG's "Proposed Credit Duration for Forestry BMPs" proposal approved by the WQGIT based on the February 2023 FWG Decision below?

Decision: The FWG determined Resource Improvement (RI) practices 9: Exclusion Area on Watercourse and 10: Forest Buffer on Watercourse to be functionally equivalent to CBP Riparian Forest Buffers based on the visual indicators published in the CBP Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verifications Visual Indicators Report by the AgWG. The FWG requests that the credit durations for these practices be extended to 15 years to align with previous decisions made by the partnership on the credit durations of tree practices.