

FOREST BUFFER RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT PRACTICES

March 2023 AgWG Meeting

Purpose of this presentation:

In February 2023, the FWG found Resource Improvement (RI) practices **9: Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse** and **10: Forest Buffer on Watercourse** to be functionally equivalent to narrow forest buffers and riparian forest buffers respectively based on the following criteria:

	RI-9,10 Visual Indicators
1	Dominant vegetation (>50% canopy cover) consists of existing, naturally regenerated, or planted trees and/or shrubs
2	Perpendicular distance from top-of-bank of stream, ditch or tidal area $\geq 10'$ minimum average for width of buffer
3	Overland/sheet flow through buffer is maximized (no concentrated flow)
4	Structural measures are present where vegetation practice is insufficient to control erosion

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.

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

Background on RI-9*,10

RI Code	RI BMP Name	Additional Practice Information
RI-9	Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse	10'-34' Width Nutrient Exclusion Area
RI-10	Forest Buffer on Watercourse	35'+ Width Buffer

*A "nutrient exclusion area" = a 10-34 ft buffer.

- Virginia, Maryland and PA Report forest buffer on watercourse.
 - As of 2021 Progress in C19, ~260,000 feet reported.

Background on RI-9*,10

- Credit duration per the [RI report](#) is 10 years. (The same as RFB, Narrow FB, Tree Planting prior to 2021 decision.)

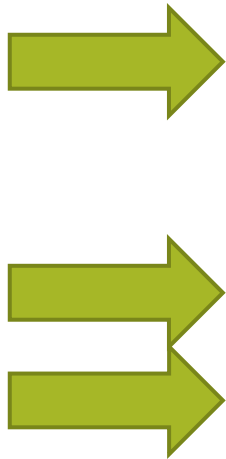
RI-9,10 Practice: Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area or Buffer on Watercourse
Re-Verification Interval: 10 years

- Credit duration in CAST per the NEIEN appendix is 5 years, but this will be updated to 10 years in C21.

BMPName	CreditDuration
Forest Buffer on Watercourse RI	5
Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse Narrow RI	5

- BMP reference guide lists RI practices as “other common practice names” for forest buffers and narrow forest buffers: [Quick Reference Guide](#)
- Per [RI Report](#), The CAST name for RI-09 is (Ag)Tree Planting (15 years) and RI-10 is Forest Buffer (15 years).

What did the FWG decision on tree practices include?



Forestry BMPs (Pink= forest buffers Blue=tree plantings)	Practice Life Span (time that a Practice is expected to persist; used primarily for cost-benefit calculations)		Credit Duration (time that a Practice is held in NEIEN before being needing reverification)	
	Current	Proposed	Current	Proposed
Ag Forest Buffer (w/o fencing- crop)	40 years	70 years	10 years	15 years*
Ag Forest Buffer (w/ fencing- pasture)	30 years	No change	10 years	15 years*
Urban Forest Buffer	40 years	No change	10 years	15 years*
Ag Tree Planting	40 years	No change	10 years	15 years, then modeled as Land Use
Narrow forest buffers (w/o fencing)	40 years	No change	10 years	15 years, then modeled as Land Use
Narrow forest buffers (w/ fencing)	25 years	No change	10 years	15 years, then modeled as Land Use
Urban tree planting	40 years	No change	10 years	15 years, then modeled as Land Use
(Urban) Forest Planting	28 years	40 years	15 years	15 years, then modeled as Land Use
Forest Harvesting BMPs	3 years (period BMPs are needed before land use reverts to undisturbed forest)	No change	3 years then reverts to Forest Land Use	No change

Recommendations of the Expert Panel to Reassess Removal Rates for Riparian Forest and Grass Buffers Best Management Practices

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Submitted to:

Forestry Workgroup
Chesapeake Bay Program

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**MORE CONTEXT
FOR THE FWG
CONTRIBUTING
TO PRACTICES
IMPLEMENTED
ON
AGRICULTURAL
LAND USES**

Why did the FWG evaluate the credit durations for RI-09 and RI-10?

- 1) **PA raised this request** to the BMPVAHAT that was charged to reevaluate credit durations across source sectors when they saw that RI practices were not included in the FWG decision.
- 2) **The 2021 WQGIT decision** reevaluated all tree practices at the CBP.
- 3) The FWG is responsible for pursuing the **Forest Buffer Outcome** (*restore 900 miles per year of RFB and conserve existing buffers until at least 70% of riparian areas are forested (this includes agricultural land uses)*) under the Vital Habitats goal. *These Forest Buffers are used to convert agricultural land to forested land in the watershed model.*
- 4) The FWG determined these practices to **be functionally equivalent** to narrow and riparian forest buffers given the visual indicators checklist.

Comparing the definitions

CBP Definition per Quick Reference Guide

- **Forest Buffer**
 - 35 ft minimum width
 - Linear wooded areas that filter nutrients and other pollutants from runoff and remove nutrients from groundwater.
- **Narrow Forest Buffer**
 - 10-35 ft
 - Linear strips of wooded areas maintained on ag land that help filter nutrients and sediments from runoff.

RI Report Definition

- **RI-10**
 - 35+ feet width
 - An area predominantly trees and/or shrubs (>50% canopy cover) established on cropland adjacent to or up gradient from streams, ditches, or tidal waters to reduce excess amounts of sediment and nutrients from runoff.
- **RI-09**
 - 10-34 ft width

Recap of the FWG request to the AgWG

FWG February 2023 Decision:

The FWG determined Resource Improvement (RI) practices **9: Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse** and **10: Forest Buffer on Watercourse** to be functionally equivalent to CBP Narrow Forest Buffers and Riparian Forest Buffers based on the visual indicators and definition published in the [CBP Resource Improvement Practice Definitions and Verifications Visual Indicators Report](#) by the AgWG.

The FWG makes the following request to the AgWG: that the credit durations for these practices be extended to 15 years to align with previous decisions made by the partnership through the WQGIT on the credit durations of tree practices.

Decision Item

Does the AgWG support the extension of credit durations of **RI-9: Forest Nutrient Exclusion Area on Watercourse** and **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 FWG determination in February 2023 that these practices are functionally equivalent to Narrow Forest Buffers and Riparian Forest Buffers respectively?