



## Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program

A Program of:



### **5 Benefits of Having Riparian Buffers**

1. Buffers filter sediment and pollution from rain water as it flows overland into our creeks.
2. The extensive root systems of wild plants help to hold soil in place, reducing stream-bank erosion.
3. Buffers prevent flooding by providing storage for rainwater which can be slowly released over time.
4. Buffers provide food and habitat for fish, birds, mammals and many other organisms.
5. Buffers are transportation corridors for land mammals as they travel between larger natural areas.

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Riparian buffers are strips of trees, shrubs, and plants that grow along creeks and streams. Buffers improve water quality in a variety of ways. Primarily, buffers filter rain water as it flows overland into the creeks. Sediment from bare soils, pollutants from road surfaces, fertilizers and pesticides from lawns and fields; all are trapped by dense vegetation, allowing only significantly cleaner water to enter our creeks.

The deeply rooted plants along the creek take in phosphorus and nitrates that are dissolved in rain water and further prevent our creeks from being polluted with excess nutrients. These extensive roots systems also help to hold soil in place, stabilizing the streambanks and preventing erosion.

The plants within a buffer also serve to prevent flooding by providing storage for rain waters; these reserved waters in turn prevent the creek from drying during drought conditions by slowly releasing water and maintaining flowing creeks.

Buffers also provide food and habitat for fish, birds, mammals and many other organisms. Overhanging vegetation creates shade which cools the water preventing the overgrowth of algae. It creates places for fish to hide from predators or when hunting for food themselves. Fallen branches and logs decompose generating organic matter which is a food source for many fish and insect species.

Buffers along creeks are transportation corridors for animals as they travel between larger natural areas. Without these important linkages between sanctuaries, many animals will be unable to search for food or mates, resulting in declining health and a decrease in their populations.

## **Get Involved!**

If you have a creek or stream on your property you can help improve local water quality.

One easy and inexpensive way to improve water quality and create habitat is to establish a buffer zone between the land and water.

You can make a difference in protecting the environment and we're here to help you do it!



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### **You may Qualify for Financial Assistance**

Grants are available to landowners who live in the designated area of the Hamilton Conservation Authority watershed to implement projects which will help improve local water quality and habitat.

Please call for more information. A free on-site consultation for advice and assistance is available to all watershed residents.

### **Eligible Projects**

Establishment of buffers along creeks, ponds and wetlands which includes native tree and shrub planting as well as native plants.

### **Program Guidelines**

To qualify for financial assistance the following criteria must be met:

- Projects must be within the eligible area.
- Projects must demonstrate an improvement to local surface and/or groundwater quality.
- The landowner must demonstrate good land stewardship practices.
- The landowner must contribute financially to the project in some capacity.

The landowner must complete a water quality improvement application and sign the project agreement contract.

### **How to Apply for Grants**

- Contact the Hamilton Watershed Stewardship Program at the Hamilton Conservation Authority to determine if your project meets the eligibility requirements of the program.
- An on-site consultation with Watershed Stewardship Program staff will be required to determine eligibility.
- Complete a water quality improvement application.
- Projects that will result in the best benefits to water quality will be prioritized for funding.
- All proposals are subject to review by an established Project Technical Advisory Committee.

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**Interested in learning  
more about natural  
features on your property?**

**Call us to arrange a free  
on-site consultation!**