



Planting trees along the Allen Brook will help reestablish a healthy watershed protection buffer.

What are the required buffer widths?

Chapter 29 of the Williston's *Unified Development Bylaw* requires the following buffer widths:

Named Streams. A buffer of at least 150 feet on both sides of the named stream. These include the Allen Brook, the Muddy Brook, the Sucker Brook, and the Winooski River.

Unnamed Streams. A buffer of at least 50 feet on both sides of a perennial or intermittent unnamed stream.

Class 2 Wetlands. A buffer of at least 50 feet above the delineated boundary of any Class II wetland.

Class 3 Wetlands. If a class 3 wetland appears to have important functional values the town usually (but not always) requires a 25 foot buffer above the delineated boundary.

Lakes & Ponds. A buffer of at least 150 feet from the bank of any lake or pond that has more than a half-acre (21,780 SF) of water surface.

What can you do to help maintain a healthy buffer?

There are several things that you can do to help improve watershed protection buffers and help keep Williston's waters clean.

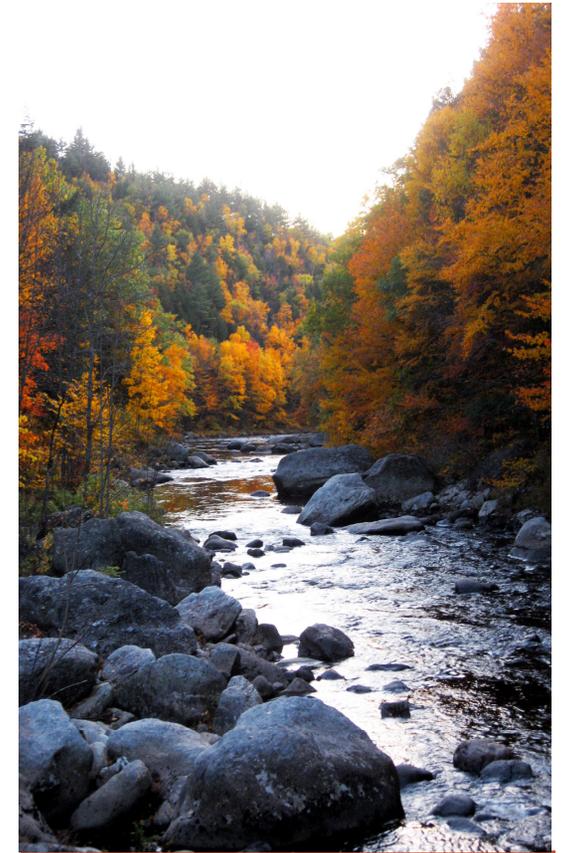
- Measure out the proper buffer area and stop current activities that may alter the buffer's integrity (such as mowing, fertilizing, etc).
- Control runoff from impervious areas (such as rooftops, driveways, etc.) on your property and reduce impervious surfaces altogether.
- Plant native shrubs or perennial grasses along the outer edge of the buffer to delineate the "no mow" boundary.
- Relocate chicken coops and other hobby farm structures outside of the limits of the buffer.

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Wetland, Stream, and Lakeside Buffers

*Williston Conservation Commission
Williston, VT*



Perennial grasses do not provide a healthy buffer zone.

What are Watershed Protection Buffers?

Watershed protection buffers are protective strips of land along on both sides of a stream and around the perimeter of a wetland, lake, or pond that protects the water body from the harmful impacts of development.

Watershed protection buffers are composed of trees, shrubs, and perennial plants that filter surface runoff before it reaches the water body. Buffer zones capture sediment, nutrients, and pathogens and reduce soil erosion by creating a dense root system that will hold soil in place. Buffer zones allow native plants, animals, and insects to thrive by enhancing an area's ecosystem.

A healthy watershed protection buffer is one with a mature forest or wetland that provides high quality habitat. Traditional turf grass lawns do not provide all of the functions of a healthy buffer.

What uses and activities are not allowed in buffers?

The following uses and activities are not allowed in watershed protection buffers:

- Mowing
- Applying fertilizers
- Applying pesticides
- Cutting trees
- Conventional turf grass lawns
- Outdoor storage
- Impervious surfaces
- Hobby farm animals and structures

What uses and activities are allowed in buffers?

The idea is to leave buffers in their natural vegetated state. Where buffers are void of trees, shrubs, and other native vegetation, the buffer should be restored to a combination of wetland, riparian, forest, and/or meadow vegetation appropriate to the site. The following uses and activities are allowed in watershed protection buffers:

- Landscaping with native trees, shrubs, and perennial plants
- Utility crossings
- Road crossings
- Trails & trail crossings
- Runoff & erosion control measures
- Stormwater treatment structures



A beaver swims in a Vermont stream.

How do buffers benefit fish and wildlife?

Healthy buffers provide valuable habitat for wildlife. Aquatic species, such as fish and aquatic bugs, benefit from the shade provided by the trees, as well as the nutrient input from the leaf litter and other organic matter that falls into the stream. Old trees and tree limbs that fall into a stream create the critical pool and riffle habitat that fish and bugs need to survive.

In addition to providing food and cover, buffers act as an important travel corridor for terrestrial species and birds. Forested buffers benefit game species such as deer, rabbit, quail and nongame species like bobcats and migratory songbirds.