
Buffer Options *for the* Bay

WHAT DO THEY DO?

Healthy, intact buffers help keep our waters clean and our basements dry, offer a home for wildlife, and protect oyster beds and eelgrass. They provide all of these benefits and more by moderating some of the major stressors on the health of our region's water bodies. These include decreasing water quality, rising sea levels and extreme storms, and loss of habitat. Healthy, intact buffers mitigate these stressors to sustain the following benefits for people and communities:

- **Improved water quality** by reducing the amount of nitrogen and sediment entering our water bodies in runoff, promoting clean water and healthy ecosystems.
- **Infrastructure protection** by lessening the impact of rising sea levels and storm surge on people and infrastructure. Rates of sea level rise in the Northeast are projected to be up to four times higher than global averages. This, combined with high density development in lowland areas, puts many communities at significant risk of coastal flooding.
- **Wildlife support** by sustaining a wide range of habitats and can allow wildlife to move across the landscape in situations where habitat adjacent to the buffer has been lost to development.

Benefit	Buffer Function	Buffer Attributes
Improved Water Quality	Reduces inputs of excess nutrients and contaminants	Highly dependent on soil type, vegetation, topography, & hydrology
	Mediates sediment	Vegetated buffer
	Influences water temperature	Tall vegetation adjacent or over the water body, typically forested.
	Provides organic inputs into aquatic system	Vegetated buffer
Flood & Storm Surge Protection	Provides flood storage	Vegetated buffer
	Reduces runoff & stabilize channel banks	Typically a forested buffer
	Infiltrates surface water	-----
Wildlife	Provides habitat for aquatic macroinvertebrates and fish, amphibians, reptile, birds, mammals	Buffer habitat must meet species' needs
Stream Migration	Allows for the natural migration and meandering of streams, rivers, and creeks	Low vegetated buffer or sediment banked buffer