

# STREAM SETBACK AND BUFFERS

## Fact Sheet SDM-1

Also known as: Aquatic buffers, riparian setbacks

### DESCRIPTION

Stream setbacks and buffers are vegetated areas that exist or are established along a stream system, lake, reservoir, or wetland area where development is restricted or prohibited. They consist of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous vegetation that separates and physically protects aquatic ecosystems and habitats from future disturbance or encroachment. Stream setbacks and buffers can either be preserved natural areas or engineered BMPs specifically designed to treat storm water runoff before it enters a stream, shore, or wetland.



Stream buffer in North Lake Tahoe, Placer County.  
Source: CDM Smith

### INSPECTION AND MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

A maintenance plan shall be provided with the SWQP. The maintenance plan shall include recommended maintenance practices, state the parties responsible for maintenance and upkeep, specify the funding source for ongoing maintenance, and provide a site specific inspection checklist. At a minimum, maintenance shall include the following:

Establish and manage distinctions of allowable and unallowable uses in each buffer zone.

Clearly identify buffer boundaries and maintain clear signs or markers defining buffer extents.

Inspect newly established vegetation semi-annually to determine if landscape maintenance is needed (reseeding, irrigation, trimming, weed removal, etc.).

Inspect disturbed and revegetated slopes semi-annually for erosion and repair as needed.

Inspect trails, paths, and bridges annually for erosion or structural issues and repair as necessary.

If applicable, contact the proprietary product manufacturer for specific maintenance requirements.

### REFERENCES

Schueler, T. 2000. The Architecture of Urban Stream Buffers, The Practice of Watershed Protection: Article 39. Center for Watershed Protection, Ellicott City, MD. Pages 225-233.

Available for download at:

[http://owl.cwp.org/mdocs-posts/elc\\_pwp39/](http://owl.cwp.org/mdocs-posts/elc_pwp39/)

Storm water Center, Aquatic Buffers Fact Sheet: Buffer Zones. Available online at:

<http://www.stormwatercenter.net/>

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Aquatic Buffer Model Ordinance. Available online at:

<https://www.epa.gov/nps/urban-runoff-model-ordinances-aquatic-buffers>