

## The Buffer Zone...

Is an area of vegetation located between developed land and a lake, stream or wetland. A good buffer protects the water, adds beauty and provides habitat for wildlife!

**Lawns** and **Shoreline** do not mix!



A most common mistake is planting lawn to the water's edge. Turf grasses have shallow roots and increase shoreline erosion. Lawns also provide limited habitat for wildlife.

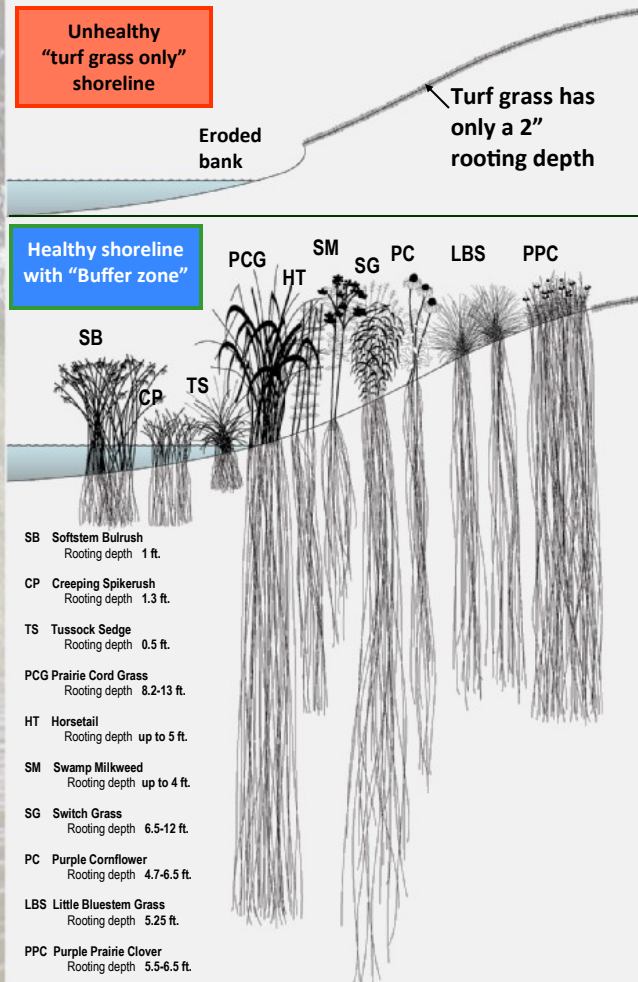
Protect the **Water**, Provide a **Buffer**!



It is not necessary to turn your entire yard into a natural prairie or forest to protect a body of water. It is easy to reach a balance between a high-quality buffer along the shore and a functional yard closer to your home.

## Native plants protect your shore

Turf grass has a shallow root system. Shorelines with turf grass commonly erode. Native plants compose a high-quality buffer. Their deep-root systems resist erosion and stabilize shorelines.



Carlton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) assists landowners with shoreline/buffer plantings in Carlton County. For more information:

Carlton SWCD Visit: <https://carltonswcd.org/>  
Call: (218) 384-3891  
Email: [alyssa.alness@carltonswcd.org](mailto:alyssa.alness@carltonswcd.org)

# The Buffer Zone

(that area along the water's edge)



## It's real estate worth protecting!

- \* Is your shoreline washing away?
  - \* Does it attract wildlife?
  - \* Do you mow to the water's edge?
  - \* Have you heard about raingarden benefits?
  - \* Do you wish for a more natural shoreline?
- We can help you protect your shoreline...**



*"I have never seen a high quality wetland without a high quality buffer surrounding it."*

— Jack Frost, RWMWD Board of Managers

## Why a buffer makes a healthier lake...

### Slows and filters runoff.

A good buffer protects your lake, stream or wetland by slowing runoff and allowing it to soak into the ground.



### Stabilizes shoreline.

Buffers prevent fluctuating water levels, moving ice, flooding, surface runoff and wave action from eroding your shoreline.

### Provides habitat.

The water's edge provides food and cover for birds, butterflies, turtles and other wildlife. A good buffer can be a very diverse habitat.

### Enhances aesthetics.

Natural buffers beautify your yard with a variety of colorful wildflowers that bloom throughout the season. Buffers can also create a natural screen, increasing privacy.

### Increases property value.

A high -quality buffer is an asset that can add resale value.

### Limits nuisance wildlife.

A native plant buffer creates a natural barrier to Canada geese.



## What does a good buffer look like?

### Wider is Better

The wider the buffer, the greater the benefit. Even a 10-foot buffer is better than no buffer at all.

### Natural Vegetation

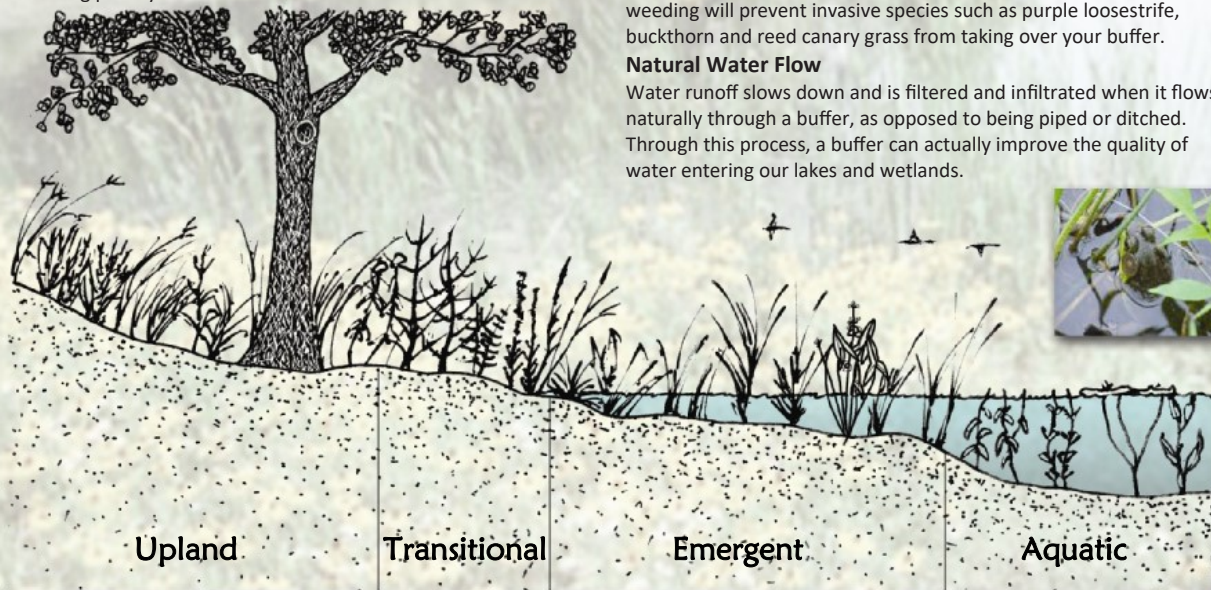
A mix of native plant species of trees, grasses, and wildflowers adds to buffer quality and improves wildlife habitat. Deep-rooted native plants are best adapted to hold soil in place.

### Weed Management

Like any urban landscape, your buffer needs maintenance. Periodic weeding will prevent invasive species such as purple loosestrife, buckthorn and reed canary grass from taking over your buffer.

### Natural Water Flow

Water runoff slows down and is filtered and infiltrated when it flows naturally through a buffer, as opposed to being piped or ditched. Through this process, a buffer can actually improve the quality of water entering our lakes and wetlands.



## How to create or enhance your buffer

There are three steps to create or enhance your own buffer. We recommend that you use the resources listed below to get started.

### 1. Study your property.

Evaluate and learn about your shoreline or wetland edge. What type of plants are growing there? Do you have an undisturbed buffer? How wide is it? Are there signs of erosion?

### 2. Create a plan.

Determine your buffer area. Research ways to remove invasive plant species. Decide on methods to increase native plant species diversity – e.g., stop mowing, seed selected areas and plant along the water. Select appropriate plant species. If erosion is a concern, choose appropriate methods of soil stabilization (may include regarding). *Note: A permit may be needed to plant below the Normal Water Level. Call MN DNR Central Region at (651) 722.7956 for more information.*

### 3. Implement your plan.

Prepare your site. Stop mowing. Spread out and slow down water flow to minimize erosion. Remove invasive weed species and turf grass. Plant or seed your buffer. Maintain your natural buffer – e.g., water the first year, weed and replant bare spots. Watch for new native plant species becoming established. Record your observations. Share your knowledge with others!

## Resources and additional information

Scott Soil and Water Conservation District  
[www.scottswcd.org](http://www.scottswcd.org)

Scott Watershed Management Organization  
[www.co.scott.mn.us/wmo](http://www.co.scott.mn.us/wmo)

University of Minnesota – Shoreland Management  
[www.shorelandmanagement.org](http://www.shorelandmanagement.org)

List of Minnesota Native Plant Suppliers  
[www.dnr.state.us/gardens/nativeplants/suppliers.html](http://www.dnr.state.us/gardens/nativeplants/suppliers.html)

MN DNR Restore your Shore (CD and book resources)  
[www.dnr.state.mn.us/restoreyourshore/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/restoreyourshore/index.html)

Blue Thumb—Planting for Clean Water  
[www.bluethumb.org](http://www.bluethumb.org)

**The ideal buffer has a mix of native species in all four of the plant zones above.**