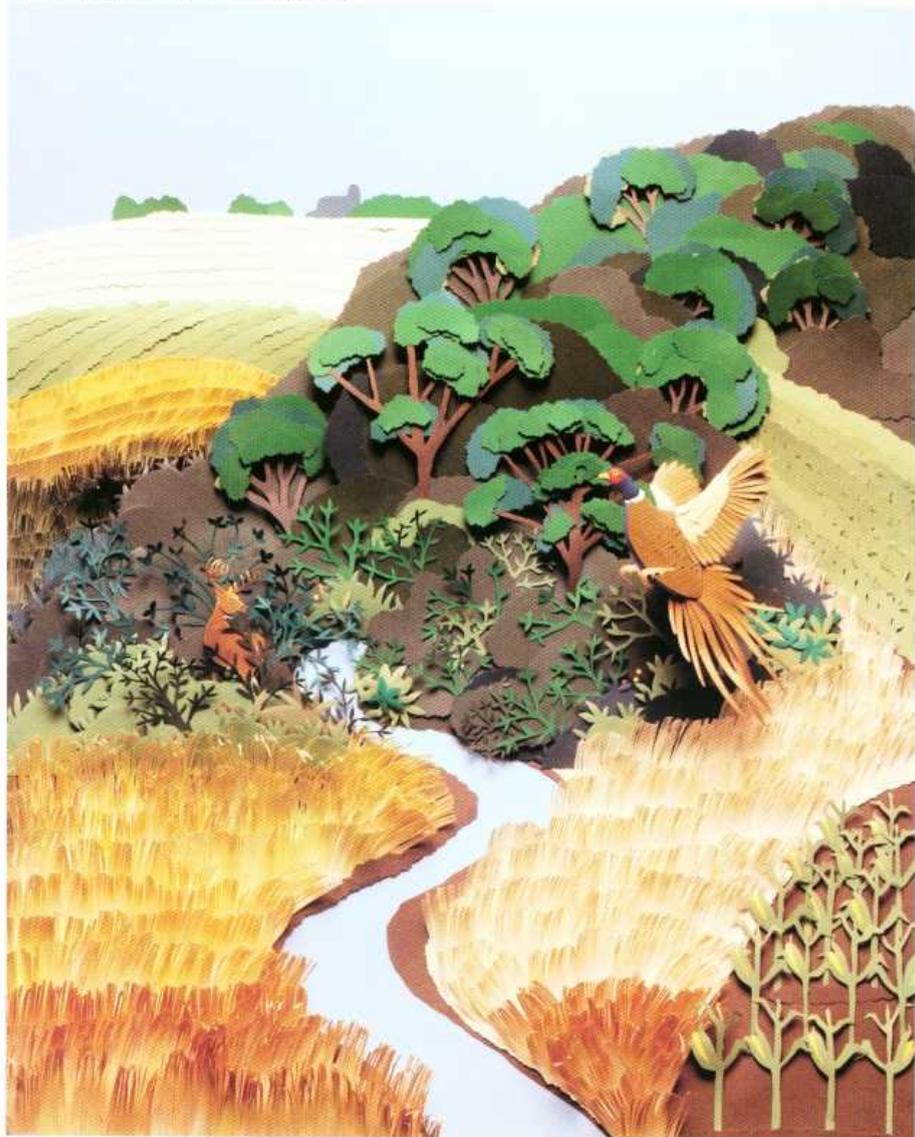


"Riparian Buffer," a paper sculpture by Pat Muchmore



**CONSERVATION BUFFERS WORK...  
ECONOMICALLY AND  
ENVIRONMENTALLY**





Conservation buffers are a simple way to help you stay profitable and protect your most valuable asset – your land. Buffers are also a great way to demonstrate your commitment to conservation.

## WHAT IS A BUFFER?

Conservation buffers are best described as strips or other areas of land in permanent vegetation that help control pollutants and manage other environmental concerns. Filter strips, riparian buffers (predominantly trees and shrubs next to water courses), field borders, grassed waterways, field windbreaks, shelterbelts, and contour grass strips are all examples of conservation buffers.

Buffers can be especially helpful to you in maintaining a productive, profitable, and responsible farming or ranching operation. Today, America's farms and ranches do more than produce crops and livestock. They play an important role in maintaining the environmental quality enjoyed by all citizens. Conservation buffers can help you protect soil, air, and water quality and improve fish and wildlife habitat...while you demonstrate your commitment to land stewardship.

## WHERE ARE BUFFERS NEEDED?

You can use conservation buffers along streams and around lakes or wetlands. They can also be installed within fields or at field edges. Buffers are most effective when they are combined with other practices, such as conservation tillage, nutrient management, and integrated pest management. Together, these practices can provide you with an effective, profitable conservation program.

## WHY DO BUFFERS WORK ECONOMICALLY?

Conservation buffers work economically because they are generally less expensive to install than practices that require extensive engineering and costly construction methods. Buffers also tend to be more economical to maintain than many other practices.

And now there are new and higher financial incentives under the continuous Conservation Reserve

Program (CRP) sign-up that make use of certain buffers more attractive economically than ever before. Moreover, you can sign up any day at your local U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Service

Center (Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service). There is no waiting period with the continuous CRP sign-up, and you need not compete against others to see who gets in. Your offer is automatically accepted if you meet the eligibility requirements.

Under the continuous CRP sign-up, the new and higher incentives for conservation buffers include:

- An up-front signing incentive payment of \$100 to \$150 per acre (depending on contract length) for certain high-priority practices: filter strips, riparian buffers, grassed waterways, shelterbelts, field windbreaks, and living snow fences.
- A practice incentive payment equal to 40 percent of your eligible practice installation cost. This is in addition to the up-to-50-percent cost-share paid by USDA for establishing approved buffers.
- Increases in maintenance payments per acre for certain activities like tree planting, fencing, and water development. Maintenance payments up to \$10 per acre per year are now possible.
- Updated CRP rental rates nationwide to better reflect the agricultural value of grazing land along streams and around lakes and other waterbodies.

Other incentives remain available for certain buffer practices under the continuous CRP sign-up. Some state and local governments, as well as private organizations, also make payments to farmers and ranchers who are willing to install and maintain buffers.



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