



Commodity Buffer Program

New access to financial incentives through the
Regional Conservation Participation Program



Commodity Buffer Program and Incentives:

What is a Commodity Buffer? Unlike any other conservation program in the nation, this program is an opportunity to showcase a practice that works on all fronts! It compensates a producer for the true value of the ground, can help provide regulatory certainty for the agricultural community, and protects water quality.

- **Who is Eligible?** Land in agricultural production (operators or landowners must provide documentation of having control or ownership of eligible land)
 - Currently only available in Washington State
 - Check geographic eligibility online at <http://wacds.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=1d1dac76e5354bb2b58715579de557c8>
 - Existing buffers can qualify as long as they meet the specifications outlined on the table on the next page.
- **What is Required?** A Producer or landowner must install and maintain required buffer size according to the type of waterway, tillage practice, and associated Soil Tillage Intensity Rating outlined in the table on the next page.
 - Can utilize EQIP program or other state funded programs to install the buffer.
 - Practices can be a filter strip (grass only, or grass/forb mix) or a native riparian forest (grasses, trees, and shrubs).
 - Producers or landowners must maintain the selected practice for a minimum of three years.
- **What are the Incentives?** Compensation rates to replace crop ground with a buffer is valued at or above adjacent crop rotations (based on USDA Risk Management Agencies projected crop prices).
 - Using a customized buffer pricing model, compensation for buffers will change annually, to adjust for fluctuations in higher market values.
 - Incentive payments are based on buffer size, tillage practices, addition of woody species, and type of buffer (including existing).
- **What are the Benefits?** The commodity buffer can help maintain the financial viability of your most productive land.
 - Can assist producer toward Farmed Smart Certification eligibility.
 - Can help provide regulatory certainty.
 - Reduces suspended and associated contaminants (ie. nutrients, pesticides and bio-solids) in runoff.
 - Can be grazed or hayed (with appropriate planning requirements).

Interested? Contact us:

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Apply today and find
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www.palousecd.org/rcpp

Commodity Buffer Program Table

Buffer requirements and payment compensation based on STIR rating and stream type

	Stream Order (1,2) Flows 0-6 months	Stream Order (2, 3) Flows 7 -10 months	Stream Order (3, 4, 5) Perennial	Stream Order (6+) Perennial & Fish Bearing
Direct Seed/No-Till (STIR: 20 or less)	No Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	20' Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>52.5' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>75' Maximum Payment Width</i>
Enhanced Mulch Till (STIR: 21 to 40)	No Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	20' Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>52.5' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>75' Maximum Payment Width</i>
Mulch Till (STIR: 41 - 80)	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>20' Maximum Payment Width</i>	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>20' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>	60' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>
High Disturbance (STIR: 81+)	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>10' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>20' Maximum Payment Width</i>	75' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>	75' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>

*Buffer practices adhere to NRCS practice standards for **Field Border (386)**, **Filter Strip (393)**, **Riparian Herbaceous Cover (390)**, or **Riparian Forest Buffer (391)**.

**Additional incentive of 10% Actual Proven History (APH) is provided for every 10' of trees and shrubs incorporated into the buffer. Woody species can be progressively added after grass buffer is established.

***There is a **\$200 per acre minimum** payment for all eligible acres

Commodity Buffer Program FAQs

Q: How wide does my buffer have to be?

A: The buffer width can be calculated from the table. The soil disturbance rating (STIR), calculated by the NRCS RUSLE program is matched with the average flow and stream order to get the minimum and maximum buffer widths and the max payment associated with them.

Q: Do I have to plant trees or shrubs in my buffer?

A: No you do not have to plant trees or shrubs. However, if you do, there is a bonus incentive payment for the contract period that you put them in.

Q: What if only one of a three year rotation has high tillage, while the other two are No-Till

A: The Soil Tillage Intensity Rating (STIR) is calculated from the highest soil disturbance within the three year contract period. The buffer may be too wide for two years but will be the correct width for that year with high soil disturbance. If you re-enroll with no-till for three years, you will get a better payment width.

Q: How long is my contract?

A: A contract length is typically three years (dependent upon available funding). If funding is no longer available during that three year contract period, then the landowner is no longer bound to maintain the Commodity Buffer Program practice standards or retain the buffer.

Q: What if I am the lessee of the property? Can I sign the contract? Who gets the payment me or my landlord?

A: All payments and contracts are made with the producer. Any agreement with the landowner is between them and the producer.

Q: I have an existing buffer, can I enroll in the program?

A: Yes, all existing buffers are eligible for the program as long as they follow and maintain the Commodity Buffer Program practice standard

Q: I have Reed Canary Grass waterway, does that count as a buffer?

A: No, Reed Canary Grass is considered an invasive species. Species composition must be to NRCS standards and specifications.

Q: Who is responsible for planting/seeding my buffer? Does the program offer cost-share on establishing the buffer?

A: Producers are responsible for implementing the installation of the grass buffer. Any cost share through the NRCS, WSCC or DOE will be subject to longer contract life and specifications of that practice along with the CBP practice standards.

Q: Can I plant Alfalfa for commodity buffer?

A: Yes, however there must also be a grass planted along with it. Alfalfa alone does not provide the stem density requirements for the Commodity Buffer Program but a mixture of grasses along with Alfalfa is acceptable. Species composition must be to NRCS standards and specifications.

Q: Is my pasture area eligible for the commodity buffer?

A: Yes, however, grazing can only happen after July 1st with an approved grazing plan.

Q: Why do I have to wait until July 1st before I can cut my buffer?

A: Following the NRCS practice standards for buffers, the Commodity Buffer Program allows for the nesting season of birds and wildlife in the buffers before they are cut. The buffer should be allowed to go to seed at least one out of the three years to help maintain a healthy stand.

Q: What if I decide to get out of the program after two years and want to take out the buffer?

A: If you terminate your contract before the end of the contract period of three years, then you will be held liable to pay back the funding from the previous two years of Commodity Buffer Program payments.

Q: How do you calculate my payment?

A: Payments are calculated based on the designated buffer width, length, and adjacent crop to the buffer. These variables and others are utilized to calculate the payment. Buffer payments shall be equal to or greater than the current value of production of the ground entered into the program.

Q: When should I expect to get my buffer payment?

A: The Commodity Buffer Program resets July 1st every year. If a buffer is installed in the fall or spring then payment will be received after July 1st of that year the practice was implemented.

Q: Can I re-enroll buffers? And do I have to make any changes to it?

A: Yes, as long as the buffer is maintained according to the required Commodity Buffer Program practice standards and STIR ratings. Re-enrollment may also depend upon funding availability.

Q: What am I allowed to use to maintain/prevent weeds in my buffer? Herbicides?

A: Because the grass buffers must be free of weeds, we suggest mixtures that create thick stands to prevent weed growth. Spraying is allowed to help maintain a weed free buffer.

Q: Will my buffer be eligible for the NRCS EQIP or CSP programs?

A: Yes, however the buffer must be 30 feet to qualify for those programs and those programs may require a more diverse mix than the Commodity Buffer Program