

1.2.2 RIPARIAN BUFFER

Parameter Guidelines

This category seeks to recognize the importance of the stream's riparian buffer to the overall health and value of the stream system. The assessment of the riparian buffer is limited to approximately 100 feet on both sides of the stream throughout the assessment reach. This category is not meant to be a detailed vegetative cover survey, but rather is a qualitative evaluation of the cover types that make up the riparian buffer. It is important not to over-emphasize the few impacted areas that may be present, but rather to apply an overall weighting of their effect on the primary function of the riparian area to filter runoff, dissipate energy, and to provide quality habitat.

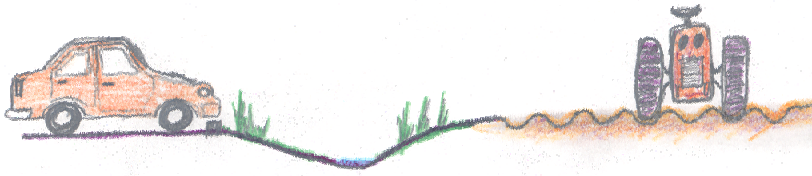
To evaluate the overall quality of the riparian buffer, first determine the riparian buffer quality within 100 feet of each bank (i.e., poor, marginal, suboptimal, or optimal) based on the quality descriptions provided on the following pages. Note if the buffer condition varies greatly within 100 feet of a stream bank, the riparian buffer condition for that stream bank should be reduced based on the inspector's professional judgment. For instance, if on the right bank of a stream there is an "optimal" buffer for 75 feet and "marginal" buffer for 25 feet, then reducing the quality classification to "suboptimal" may be appropriate.

Once the buffer conditions for the left and right bank have been determined, the final step is to establish the overall riparian buffer condition for the reach by referring to the matrix below (Table 1-2).

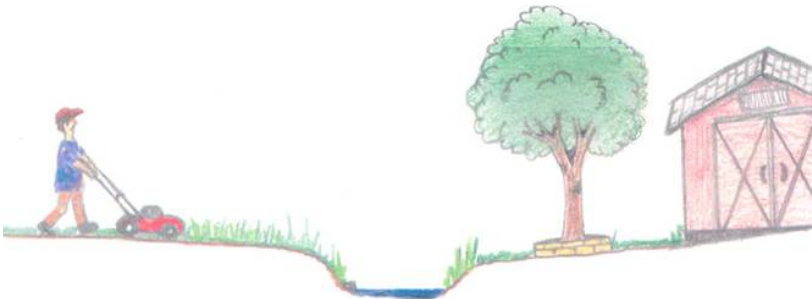
**TABLE 1-2: RIPARIAN BUFFER CONDITIONS
FOR LEFT AND RIGHT BANKS**
RIGHT BANK - Buffer Condition

LEFT BANK - Buffer Condition		Poor	Marginal	Suboptimal	Optimal
	Poor		Poor	Poor	Marginal
Marginal		Poor	Marginal	Marginal	Suboptimal
Suboptimal		Marginal	Marginal	Suboptimal	Suboptimal
Optimal		Marginal	Suboptimal	Suboptimal	Optimal

RIPARIAN BUFFER (cont)



POOR: Any of the following conditions exist within 50 feet of the top of the stream bank: (1) roads (paved or unpaved) or other impervious areas, (2) actively plowed cropland, (3) stock feed lots/dairy, (4) mine lands, or (5) comparably disturbed conditions.



MARGINAL: Any of the following conditions exist adjacent to the top of the stream bank: (1) lawns or mowed areas, (2) active pasture, (3) nurseries, (4) golf courses, (5) minor impervious areas, or (6) comparable conditions.

RIPARIAN BUFFER (cont.)



SUBOPTIMAL: Any of the following conditions exist adjacent to the top of the stream bank: (1) forest with dense canopy layer, but with heavily grazed scrub-shrub and herbaceous layers, (2) forest with sparse overstory canopy cover; (3) vegetative community dominated by scrub-shrub cover; (4) recent cutover, dense, non-maintained herbaceous cover, and/or inactive or lightly grazed pasture; (5) naturally vegetated, non-maintained riparian buffer less than 100 feet wide; or (6) trails within 25 feet of the stream, utility crossings or parallel corridors; or periodic stormwater outfalls.



OPTIMAL: Multiple canopy layers are present with well-developed herbaceous, scrub-shrub, mid and overstory canopy. The riparian corridor is a minimum of 100 feet in width on both sides of the reach. This condition is usually only found in undeveloped areas or parklands.

NOTES: