

# 3 Tiered Buffer Easement Program Union County Conservation District

A conceptual - technical- administrative  
overview

# Why Riparian Buffers?

- Science
- Nutrient remediation efficiencies
- Funding programs
- Multiple Benefits
  - Nutrient mgmt.
  - Flood control/Stormwater mgmt.
  - Wildlife
  - Air quality
  - Aesthetics
  - Streambank stabilization
  - Existing Conservation Easement models
- Existing Conservation Easement models (Pa land trust)

# Why a conservation easement?

- Fair compensation tool
- Long term public benefit/public solution
- Permanently protected
- Legally Enforceable
- Trees demand long term focus

# Why pay rates of \$3000-\$6000/a?

- Most landowner rights have been separated by easement:
  - can still recreate
  - can still pay property taxes
  - limited timber harvest
- Need to compete with crop profits of \$300-\$400/ac/year (fixed costs not calculated)
- Agland Preservation appraisals show “bare” agland values to run \$6000-\$10,000/a
- Pay rates need to approach sale value of the land!

# Why a three-tiered approach?

- Maximize tools in the toolbox
- For some folks, this could be an attractive start
- One option allows some cropping
- Gives landowner flexibility in mgmt.

# Requirements:

Minimum buffer width = 35 feet

- Nutrient & Sediment benefits do not start until at least 35 feet

**Maximum buffer width paid = 100 feet**

**Minimum 15 foot forested zone for all three tiers**

**No Timbering except under the guidance of a forest mgmt. plan outside of the 15 foot zone**

**Converted cropland/pastureland only**

# Three Tiers Described

- Tier #1 – (Grass Buffer) – Allowed to make hay, however, no manure or fertilizer, grant pays \$3000/acre
- Tier#2 – (Mixed Buffer) – Mixture of grasses and shrubs, can mow one time/year for invasives control, no harvesting, grant pays \$4000/acre
- Tier#3 – (Forested Buffer) – Entire width is planted in trees, grant pays \$6,465/acre
- Property owner could have several tiers on their property
- Note: Full values are 15% higher than pay rates, this is the 15% in kind contribution required for GG
- Landowner pays legal and recording fees
- Easements enforced by Conservation District

# What are we getting?

- Example:
  - \$100,000 public investment:
    - Use - 50 foot wide permanent buffer (tier #2)
    - $\$100,000 / \$4,000 = 25$  acres
    - 435 feet of stream protected/acre (both sides of stream) yields 10,875 linear feet of stream permanently protected (100 feet wide), or \$9.20/foot!



# Questions

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