

Stream Buffers Q & A

WHAT IS A RIPARIAN STREAM BUFFER?

A riparian stream buffer is an area running parallel alongside both sides of a stream, river, pond, or lake in which disturbance of land or vegetation is restricted in order to protect the health of the stream and enhance water quality. The size of the area varies depending upon the type of water body.

HOW CAN I TELL IF MY DITCH IS REALLY A STREAM?

Some streams and water bodies are easy to identify. Others may seem to function only as a ditch that carries stormwater during and immediately after rain fall, or may carry water only in the winter or spring. What appears to be a ditch may be a protected stream. Before conducting any of the activities that require a permit or are prohibited within buffers, please contact ACC Transportation & Public Works to determine if a channel or ditch on your property is a protected stream. **Call: 706.613.3440**

WHAT BENEFITS DO I GET FROM THE BUFFER?

Stream buffers help to filter pollution out of runoff as it enters the stream. Buffers help to absorb and slow down runoff, reducing the risk of flooding. Buffers also shade the stream and provide food and habitat for many animals. Larger animals like deer use the stream buffers like highways as they travel throughout the county in search of food and shelter. A stream is only truly healthy when it has a healthy riparian buffer.

PLEASE CONTACT THE DESIGNATED
ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY DEPARTMENT FOR
MORE INFORMATION
REGARDING THE FOLLOWING:

STORMWATER DIVISION

Transportation & Public Works Department

706-613-3440

IS THIS A STREAM?

WHAT CAN I DO WITHIN THE BUFFER?

WATER POLLUTION / ILLICIT DISCHARGES

HOW TO RESTORE / PROTECT THE BUFFER

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

706-613-3515

TREE REMOVAL

DO I NEED AN ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS
PERMIT?

BUILDING NEAR THE BUFFER

PUBLIC UTILITIES

706-613-3470

SEWER LEAKS

TAP WATER QUALITY

for further information:

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

120 WEST DOUGHERTY STREET
ATHENS, GEORGIA 30601
706.613.3515


STORMWATER DIVISION

120 WEST DOUGHERTY STREET
ATHENS, GA 30601
706.613.3440

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Rules for Stream Buffers

PROTECTED ENVIRONMENTAL AREAS
CHAPTER 8-6 OF THE
ACC CODE OF ORDINANCES

THE DO'S AND DON'TS WITHIN STREAM BUFFERS

YOU DON'T NEED A PERMIT TO...

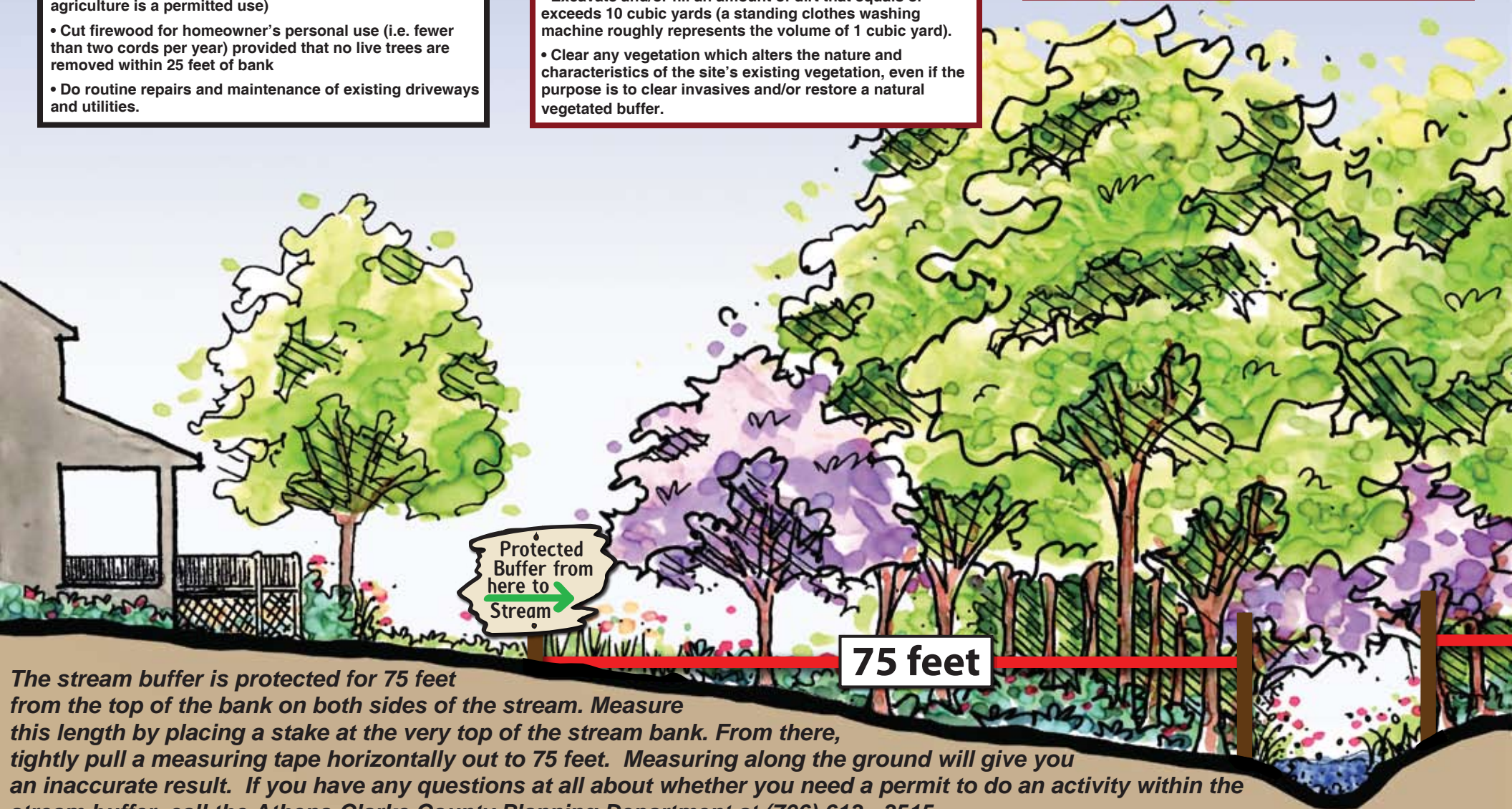
- Do ordinary maintenance of yards (i.e. mowing an existing lawn but no clearing vegetation to sod a new lawn)
- Plant and maintain home gardens (however, if clearing of vegetation is required to prepare area for garden, a permit must be obtained)
- Do agricultural production and management (where agriculture is a permitted use)
- Cut firewood for homeowner's personal use (i.e. fewer than two cords per year) provided that no live trees are removed within 25 feet of bank
- Do routine repairs and maintenance of existing driveways and utilities.

YOU DO NEED A PERMIT TO...

- Construct a home, an addition to a home, and/or accessory structures like detached garages, storage buildings, etc.
- Construct new drives, parking or utilities.
- Construct decks, pools, patio areas, fences and walls.
- Excavate and/or fill an amount of dirt that equals or exceeds 10 cubic yards (a standing clothes washing machine roughly represents the volume of 1 cubic yard).
- Clear any vegetation which alters the nature and characteristics of the site's existing vegetation, even if the purpose is to clear invasives and/or restore a natural vegetated buffer.

YOU SHOULD NEVER...

- Remove living trees within 25 feet of the bank, except to construct a permitted stream crossing.
- Install septic tanks or septic tank drain fields.
- Handle or store hazardous or agricultural wastes.
- Apply fertilizers or pesticides.



75 feet

The stream buffer is protected for 75 feet from the top of the bank on both sides of the stream. Measure this length by placing a stake at the very top of the stream bank. From there, tightly pull a measuring tape horizontally out to 75 feet. Measuring along the ground will give you an inaccurate result. If you have any questions at all about whether you need a permit to do an activity within the stream buffer, call the Athens-Clarke County Planning Department at (706) 613 - 3515.