

WETLAND BUFFERS

A guide for permit applicants



MINNEHAHA CREEK
WATERSHED DISTRICT

Recognizing the important natural functions of wetlands, MCWD's Wetland Protection Rule seeks to protect and enhance the quantity, quality, and biological diversity of the watershed's wetlands by mitigating both direct and indirect impacts.

To learn more, visit: www.minnehahacreek.org/permits



What are wetland buffers?

Wetland buffers are vegetated areas between a wetland boundary and a development site or other land disturbance. Wetland buffers protect wetlands from runoff, erosion, and other impacts. Required buffer width can range from 20-75 feet, depending on the quality of the wetland and the type of project bordering the buffer. For example, a 25-foot buffer is commonly required for new single-family homes.

MCWD's Wetland Protection Rule requires wetland buffers downgradient of new homes and new or reconstructed hard surfaces that require a Stormwater Management Permit, as well as around wetlands regulated under MCWD's Waterbody Crossings and Structures Rule. Once established, buffers are permanent, even if property ownership changes.

Why are wetland buffers important?

Wetland buffers protect wetlands by minimizing encroachment, protecting and improving water quality, and providing wildlife habitat.

Wetland buffers:



Allow soil and plants to absorb and filter pollutants before they reach the wetland.



Slow and store water during heavy rainfall, reducing flood risk.



Provide habitat for pollinators, amphibians, birds, and other wildlife in developed areas.

The Do's and Don'ts of Wetland Buffer Maintenance

✓ Do	× Don't
✓ Install permanent, standard signage at the buffer's boundary. ✓ Plant native species to maintain biodiversity and ecological function; invasive or diseased vegetation may be cut or removed. ✓ Remove trees that are dead, diseased, or pose a safety hazard, but minimize disturbance to the extent possible. ✓ Form a direct trail or path, up to four feet wide, through the buffer as needed during establishment.	× Remove or alter wetland buffer signage. × Place fill like mulch, yard waste, or other debris, within the buffer. × Mow, fertilize, cultivate, or otherwise disturb buffer vegetation. × Remove trees and disturb vegetation unnecessarily. × Create an unnecessarily wide or expansive trail that minimizes or disturbs the buffer area.