

Virginia State Riparian Buffer Tax Credit

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Did you know you may qualify for a state tax credit if you leave a riparian buffer on your final harvest or thinning? Through the Virginia State Riparian Buffer Tax Credit Program (<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/tax/credit/riparianbuffer/index.htm>), if you leave a minimum 35-foot riparian buffer and have either a Stewardship Plan, Tree Farm Plan, or a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP 106), you can earn up to a \$17,500 tax credit. The buffer can be managed (at least 50% of basal area must be retained) but must be retained for 15 years. Through this program, you will not only earn a tax credit, but the streamside buffers you leave will protect water quality, stabilize soil, and may also create wildlife habitat. The program is good for your pocket and good for water and wildlife.

To apply to the program, you first need to obtain a management plan for the area of planned harvest. If using a Tree Farm or CAP 106 plan, you must also submit a Stewardship Plan application to Virginia Department of Forestry (VDof) at no charge. You can acquire a Stewardship plan from your VDof Area Forester at a cost of for \$1.50/acre (minimum charge of \$200).

After your property is harvested, submit your Stewardship Plan along with form 179 "Application for Riparian Forest Buffer Tax Credit" and supporting documentation (Location of Property, Legal description / Plat Reference, timber valuation, Harvest Identification Number) to your local VDof Area Forester. If you have a consulting forester or supplier, they can help you put the correct information into your application. Note that there is a \$150 fee to apply for the tax credit. If for some reason VDof does not approve your application, they will refund this fee.

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