South Dakota Riparian Buffer Initiative

What Are Riparian Buffers?

Riparian buffers are a strip of vegetation between agricultural land and a stream which help protect the stream from impacts of the land use around it. Buffer strips improve water quality and provide valuable habitat, bank stabilization, forage for livestock, and increase the value of marginal crop lands. Buffers are an excellent conservation practice vital to improving South Dakota's impaired watersheds

Before buffer strips…

After buffer strips…

photos courtesy of the Big Sioux River Watershed Implementation Project

Program Requirements

- Land must be within one hundred twenty feet of a waterbody noted in ARSD 74:51:03 or must be locally designated by the local board of county commissioners as outlined in SDCL 10-6-31.7
- Must have existing or be willing to establish perennial vegetation
- Vegetation may not be harvested or mowed between May 1st – August 1st
- Vegetation may not be grazed between May 1st – September 30th
- A minimum of four inches of cover must always be maintained
- Buffers must be a minimum of 50 feet and cannot exceed 120 feet in width
- Must commit to a ten-year contract

Benefits to Landowners

- Vegetation in the buffer may be grazed or hayed in the spring and fall
- Exclusion fencing and alternative water cost-share is available
- Increased bank stabilization and water quality for the streams
- Incentive payments and tax breaks for landowners

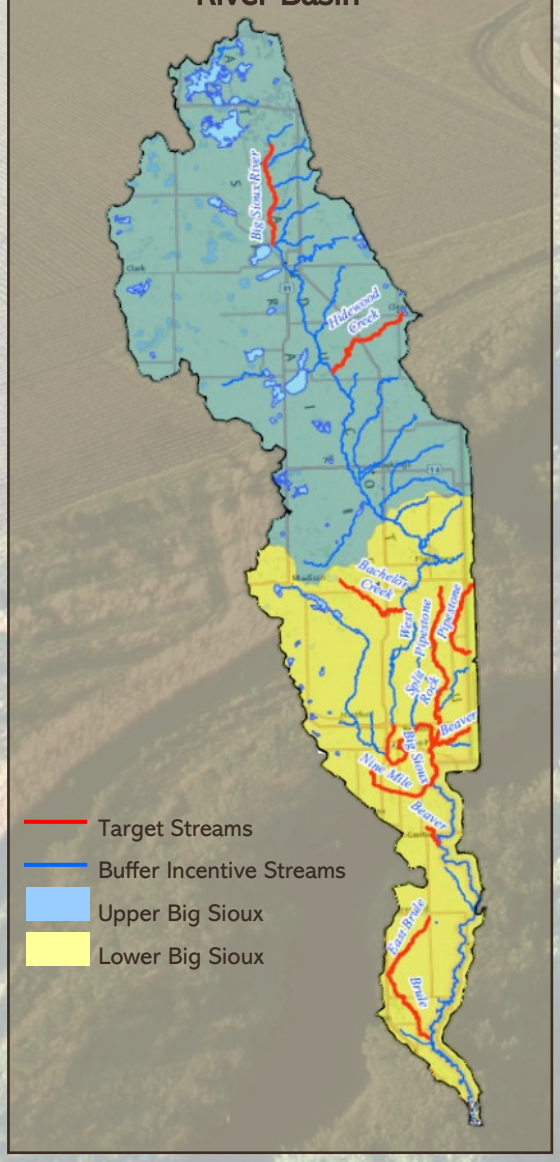
Incentive Payments

Payments are based on county Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) rental rates for filter strips on croplands and marginal pasture lands and will vary depending on location.

Non-Targeted Steam Segments – Payments will equal 50 percent of the CRP rate for cropland or pastureland for 10 years.

Targeted Stream Segments – Payments will equal 100 percent of the CRP rate for cropland or pastureland for 10 years. In addition, participants with pastureland in targeted stream segments are eligible for exclusion fencing and alternative water expenses.

Target Streams in the Big Sioux River Basin



For Example…

Cropland – ½ mile of targeted stream buffered at 50 feet = 3.03 acres of buffer. The overall average rental rate is $171 per acre. $171 x 3.03 ac x 10 years = $5,181.30

Pastureland – ½ mile of stream buffered at 50 feet would equal 3.03 acres of buffer. The overall average rental rate is $45 per acre. $45 x 3.03 ac x 10 years = $1,363.5

Rental rates will vary by location
Cropland: $131 - $219
Pastureland: $36 - $53

For more information contact

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