April 6, 2009

# RIPARIAN FOREST BUFFER GUIDANCE
## Summary

**I. Purpose:**

- Guide DEP staff in developing Riparian Forest Buffer recommendations for all regulatory, voluntary and grant programs.
- Assist outside entities in developing appropriate science-based guidelines or policies regarding Riparian Forest Buffers.

**II. Guidance**:

**1. Conditions where practice applies**- stable areas adjacent to perennial or intermittent streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.

**2. Composition of existing Riparian Forest Buffers**

- Minimum 60% uniform canopy cover (area of ground covered by a vertical projection of the canopy of all native shrubs and trees)
- 0% Pennsylvania Noxious Weeds
- Less than 25% invasive species
- Concentrated flow and accelerated erosion and sedimentation should be controlled in the area up grade and immediately adjacent to the existing Riparian Forest Buffer.

**3. Composition of newly established Riparian Forest Buffers**

- Zone 1 (Undisturbed Forest) adjacent to the water body and extending out a minimum of 50 feet.
- Zone 2 (Managed Forest) is adjacent to Zone 1 extending outward a minimum of 50 feet.
- Concentrated flow and accelerated erosion and sedimentation should be controlled in the area up grade and immediately adjacent to the newly established Riparian Forest Buffer.

**4. Width:**

- Minimum **100 foot** width (Zones 1 and 2) on both sides of streams and rivers and around perimeter of lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.
- On streams designated as Exceptional Value and High Quality Waters increase **minimum** (Zones 1 and 2 proportionally) to **150 foot** width.
- Extend minimum width on case by case basis due to existing water quality impairment or threat to water quality from surrounding land use.

**5. Management of Riparian Forest Buffers**: This describes practices and activities that should be restricted within Riparian Forest Buffers.

**6. Protection of Riparian Forest Buffers:** This encourages the use of permanent easements for protection Riparian Forest Buffers in perpetuity.

**III. How to Apply the Guidance:** This section describes how to apply widths and buffer dimensions in the field.

**Appendices**:

A. Functions and Benefits of Riparian Forest Buffers
B. Evaluation and Classification of Existing Buffers
C. Riparian Forest Buffer Protection
D. References