

Commodity Buffer Program Parameters for Landowners

The Walla Walla County Commodity Buffer Program is a new program that pays producers to plant and maintain buffers on private agricultural land to protect water quality. It offers two different options to protect water quality: buffering agricultural land right along major waterbodies, and buffering agricultural land further away with runoff issues that impact major waterbodies. The location of the buffer determines the rules that apply.

Buffers Along Major Waterbodies

If you have crops growing right along a major waterbody in Walla Walla County, you may be eligible to receive cost-share to plant and maintain a buffer strip there. The following rules apply to payments for buffers in these areas:

Eligibility

- If area is CREP-eligible already, contact Grant Traynor at 509-956-3767 or grant.traynor@wwccd.net to see which program is a better fit
- Buffers will follow stem density (30 stems/ft²) and width requirements (see Major Waterbody Buffer Pricing Model on next page)
- Existing buffers are eligible if they meet requirements and are not in another contract

Payments (3-year contracts)

- Annual buffer payments are based on the following factors:
 - Upland practices (see Major Waterbody Buffer Pricing Model on next page)
 - Stream type (see Major Waterbody Buffer Pricing Model on next page)
 - Adjacent crop yield (average or estimate) and crop price (crop price obviously changes each year, so the payment does as well)
 - Species planted

Landowner Responsibilities

- Responsible for seeding and maintaining buffer to specifications detailed in a Landowner Agreement
- Agrees to scheduled buffer field checks for the following:
 - Implementation (width, species)
 - Confirmed adjacent upland practices
 - No cutting or grazing has occurred before July 1st

Major Waterbody Buffer Pricing Model

Payment totals for buffers along major waterbodies are all directly tied to crop price and yield. This table outlines buffer area requirements and maximum payment area based on tillage practices. **The buffer widths in this table ONLY APPLY to buffers directly on streams and other major waterbodies. Buffers that are not planted along major waterbodies have their own buffer width rules (see next page).**

Commodity Buffer Program Table

Buffer requirements and payment compensation based on STIR rating and stream type

	Stream Order (1,2) Flows 0-6 months	Stream Order (2, 3) Flows 7 -10 months	Stream Order (3, 4, 5) Perennial	Stream Order (6+) Perennial & Fish Bearing
Direct Seed/No-Till (STIR: 20 or less)	No Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	20' Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>52.5' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>75' Maximum Payment Width</i>
Enhanced Mulch Till (STIR: 21 to 40)	No Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	20' Minimum Buffer Width <i>30' Maximum Payment Width</i>	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>52.5' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>75' Maximum Payment Width</i>
Mulch Till (STIR: 41 - 80)	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>20' Maximum Payment Width</i>	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>20' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>	60' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>
High Disturbance (STIR: 81+)	35' Minimum Buffer Width <i>10' Maximum Payment Width</i>	50' Minimum Buffer Width <i>20' Maximum Payment Width</i>	75' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>	75' Minimum Buffer Width <i>35' Maximum Payment Width</i>

Buffers Away from Major Waterbodies

If you have crops growing further away from a major waterbody in Walla Walla County, you may still be eligible for this program. For example, your field may be adjacent to a road with erosion issues that impact a stream, agricultural field drainages/low points may carry sediment into water nearby, or your field may be downhill from a neighbor with erosion issues. If you think there is an issue along your property that can impact water quality, find more information below.

Eligibility

- Approval and placement of off-stream buffers will be determined on a case-by case basis, as every situation is unique. Please contact Grant Traynor at 509-956-3767 or grant.traynor@wwccd.net so staff can review your eligibility
- Buffers must still conform to NRCS/CBP stem density parameters (30 stems/ft²)
- Off-stream buffer contracts will undergo a ranking process for priority approval/implementation and can accepted or rejected based on
 - Area of implementation
 - Critical areas improved
 - Upland practices
 - Landowner commitment

Payments (3-year contracts)

- Landowners will still be directly compensated based on adjacent crop price/yield, but buffer minimum width and maximum area/payment will be determined on a case-by-case basis, based on the area of implementation, potential buffer impact, upland practices, and funds available.

Landowner Responsibilities

- Responsible for seeding and maintaining buffer to specifications detailed in the Landowner Agreement
- Agrees to scheduled buffer field check for the following
 - Implementation (width, species)
 - Confirmed adjacent upland practices
 - No cutting or grazing has occurred before July 1st