

Streams in Your Neighborhood Need Your Help

Streams flowing through suburban areas need special care. New expanses of impervious surfaces (roofs, parking lots, and streets) will not allow rainfall to soak into the ground. As urbanizing areas develop, natural stream channels must increase in size to handle a higher volume of stormwater runoff coming from impervious surfaces. High, turbulent waters scour stream channels and undercut the banks until the tops of the stream banks cave in and are carried away, degrading the stream with tons of sediment. Healthy stream banks should angle gently away from the stream.



Stream banks should be protected with vegetation and trees. Streamside vegetation acts as a filter for runoff flowing from upland areas towards the stream and is very effective in trapping and absorbing runoff and associated pollutants. The shade from trees and shrubs whose canopies overhang the stream keeps the water cool to protect stream-dwelling organisms. Buffers also provide excellent habitat for birds and other wildlife.

Landowners should bear in mind that any grading or significant changes within the stream channel that would affect the flow or cross-section of the channel require a State permit. This permit is granted only if the landowner can prove that the proposed change will not negatively impact the environment or the stream's ability to convey stormwater.

The best protection for streams is the establishment of a riparian buffer strip, a protected area extending beyond the stream-banks that is densely planted in grasses, shrubs, and trees. Many non-profit organizations have stream buffer planting projects. You can volunteer to help with these projects. Contact the Cecil County Soil Conservation District for more information on the available cost-share programs offered for installing buffers.

Where To Get Help for stream information

- Cecil Soil Conservation District 410-398-4411 ext. 3;
<http://www.cecilscd.com>
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources Streams
<http://www.dnr.state.md.us/streams/>
- USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Buffer Strips Common Sense Conservation; http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/home/?cid=nrcs143_023568