



## REDWOOD COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL OFFICE

*Planning & Zoning • Parks & Trails • GIS  
Aquatic Invasive Species • Septic Inspector  
Drainage Inspector • Agricultural Inspector*

PO BOX 130  
REDWOOD FALLS  
MINNESOTA 56283  
PH: 507-637-4023

### PUBLIC NOTICE

A public hearing will be held at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Redwood County Planning Commission, which will occur at 1:00 o'clock p.m. on Monday, the 27<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2017, at the Board Room of the Redwood County Government Center located at 403 South Mill Street, Redwood Falls, MN 56283 to discuss enacting an ordinance pursuant to Minnesota Statutes §103F.48 for the enforcement of riparian vegetated buffers.

The purpose of the proposed ordinance is to coordinate the implementation and enforcement of the water resources riparian protection requirements of Minn. Stat. §103F.48 (the buffer law) with the existing rules and regulations adopted by Redwood County, and to provide efficient and effective direction to landowners via local control of the State's statutory mandates in order to avoid adverse impact upon the health, safety, and general welfare of the county.

If you have any comments or questions regarding this matter, please contact the Redwood County Environmental Office by telephone at (507) 637-4023 or in writing at *Redwood County Environmental Office, P.O. Box 130, Redwood Falls, MN 56283.*

DATED: February 9<sup>th</sup>, 2017

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Nicholas W. Brozek  
Land Use and Zoning Supervisor  
Redwood County Environmental Office





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### **SUBJECT: Buffer Law Assumption of Jurisdiction**

In June of 2015, the “buffer law” was signed into law. This law requires that a 16.5 ft. (1 rod) buffer be installed along all 103E Public Ditches and a 50 ft. buffer be installed along all Public Waters.

Buffers need to be installed by:

Public Waters - November 1, 2017

Public Ditches - November 1, 2018.

The implementation of this law is shared by several different entities, one of which may be the County. The division of responsibilities to implement this law is as follows:

**MN DNR:** The DNR is tasked with creating the “buffer map” which is the official determination of which waters need a buffer and what size that buffer needs to be. We have worked closely with the DNR to provide corrections to the map to make sure it is an accurate reflection of the law’s requirements. The DNR has no additional responsibilities beyond creating and amending the “buffer map”.

**SWCD:** The Redwood County Soil and Water Conservation District is tasked with determining if a landowner is or is not in compliance with the “buffer law”. Through a combination of aerial analysis and on the ground follow ups, the SWCD will determine if adequate buffers are in place. If the SWCD discovers inadequate buffers on a waterway, they will send a notice of non-compliance to either BWSR or the County for enforcement actions.

**County:** Redwood County has the option to assume enforcement jurisdiction. This is done through the adoption of a County Ordinance outlining the enforcement process. If Redwood County does not assume enforcement jurisdiction, BWSR has the option to withhold all funding received under the Natural Resources Block Grant and will assume enforcement jurisdiction themselves.

**BWSR:** BWSR is tasked with enforcement jurisdiction if the County does not assume that jurisdiction itself, or fails to adequately enforce their Ordinance.

**What happens if Redwood County assumes enforcement jurisdiction?**

- We will keep local control over the buffer law.
- Landowners will be able to come visit the County Office if they have questions and speak with us one on one.
- We will have the additional responsibility of working with some landowners to come into compliance with the buffer law.
- We will assume some additional exposure to liability in the event someone wants to challenge our enforcement penalty order. This is no different from the potential liability we already have by decisions our office makes every day. It depends on our ability to follow the ordinance and do our job correctly.

**What happens if Redwood County does not assume enforcement jurisdiction?**

- BWSR may withhold the following funding we receive under the Natural Resources Block Grant. This includes:
  - Local Water Management - \$14,472
  - Wetland Conservation Act - \$10,387
  - DNR Shoreland - \$2,668
  - MPCA SSTS - \$18,600
  - Total - \$46,127
- BWSR will be the responsible entity in enforcing buffers within the County. They will use something very similar to the model ordinance in their enforcement.
- The Redwood SWCD will still be responsible for determining compliance and non-compliance.
- The implementation of the buffer law is not affected.

# Buffer Law Enforcement Ordinance

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## 1.0 STATUTORY AUTHORIZATION AND POLICY

- 1.1 **Statutory Authorization.** This buffer ordinance is adopted pursuant to the authorization and policies contained in Minn. Stat. §103F.48 and the county planning and zoning enabling legislation in Minn. Stat. chapter 394.
- 1.2 **Policy.** It is the policy of the County to:
- (a) Provide for riparian vegetated buffers and water quality practices to achieve the following purposes:
    - (1) Protect state water resources from erosion and runoff pollution;
    - (2) Stabilize soils, shores and banks; and
    - (3) Protect or provide riparian corridors.
  - (b) Coordinate the implementation and enforcement of the water resources riparian protection requirements of Minn. Stat. §103F.48 with the shoreland management rules and ordinances adopted under the authority of Minn. Stat. §103F.201 to 103F.227 and the management of public drainage systems established under Minn. Stat. chapter 103E where applicable; and
  - (c) Provide efficient and effective direction to landowners and protection of surface water quality and related land resources.

## 2.0 DEFINITIONS AND GENERAL PROVISIONS

- 2.1 **Definitions.** Unless specifically defined below, words or phrases used in this ordinance shall be interpreted to give them the same meaning they have in common usage and to give this ordinance its most reasonable application. For the purpose of this ordinance, the words "must" and "shall" are mandatory and not permissive. All distances, unless otherwise specified, are measured horizontally.
- 2.1.1 **"Board"** means the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources.
  - 2.1.2 **"Buffer"** means an area consisting of perennial vegetation, excluding invasive plants and noxious weeds, adjacent to all bodies of water within the state and that protects the water resources of the state from runoff pollution; stabilizes soils, shores, and banks; and protects or provides riparian corridors.
  - 2.1.3 **"Buffer protection map"** means buffer maps established and maintained by the commissioner of natural resources.
  - 2.1.4 **"Commissioner"** means the commissioner of natural resources.
  - 2.1.5 **"Cultivation farming"** means practices that disturb root or soil structure or that impair the viability of perennial vegetation due to cutting or harvesting near the soil surface.
  - 2.1.6 **"Drainage authority"** means the board or joint county drainage authority having jurisdiction over a drainage system or project.
  - 2.1.7 **"Public drainage system"** means a system of ditch or tile, or both, to drain property, including laterals, improvements, and improvements of outlets, established and constructed by a drainage authority. "Drainage system" includes the improvement of a natural waterway used in the construction of a drainage system and any part of a flood control plan proposed by the United States or its agencies in the drainage system.
  - 2.1.8 **"Executive director"** means the executive director of the Board of Water and Soil Resources.

2.1.9 **"Local water management authority"** means a watershed district, metropolitan water management organization, or County operating separately or jointly in its role as local water management authority under Minn. Stat. chapter 103B or Minn. Stat. chapter 103D.

2.1.10 **"Normal water level"** means the level evidenced by the long-term presence of surface water as indicated directly by hydrophytic plants or hydric soils or indirectly determined via hydrological models or analysis.

2.1.11 **"Public waters"** has the meaning given in section 103G.005, subdivision 15. The term public waters as used in this section applies to waters that are on the public waters inventory as provided in section 103G.201

2.1.12 **"Shoreland management rules"** means the standards and criteria for the subdivision, use, and development of the shorelands of public waters as provided in Minn. Rules parts 6120.2500 – 6120.3900

2.1.13 **"SWCD"** means the Redwood County Soil and Water Conservation District

2.2 **Severability.** If any section, clause, provision, or portion of this ordinance is adjudged unconstitutional or invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this ordinance shall not be affected thereby.

### 2.3 Data sharing/management

2.3.1 The County may enter into arrangements with an SWCD, a watershed district if applicable, the Board and other parties with respect to the creation and maintenance of, and access to, data concerning buffers and alternative practices under this ordinance.

2.3.2 The County will manage all such data in accordance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act and any other applicable laws.

## 3.0 JURISDICTION

3.1 **Jurisdiction.** The provisions of this ordinance apply to all waters, including public ditches established under Minn. Stat. chapter 103E, Public Waters, and waters included in the Redwood County Shoreland Ordinance, as shown on the buffer protection map.

## 4.0 BUFFER REQUIREMENTS

4.1 **Buffer width.** Except as provided in subsection 4.5, a landowner must establish and maintain a buffer area in accordance with what is shown on the buffer protection map:

(a) For waters shown on the buffer protection map requiring a fifty (50) foot buffer, the landowner must establish a buffer with a (50) foot average width and a thirty (30) foot minimum width as measured according to subsection 4.2, and

(b) For waters shown on the buffer protection map requiring a sixteen and a half (16.5) foot buffer, the landowner must establish a buffer with a sixteen and a half (16.5) foot minimum width as measured according to subsection 4.2.

### 4.2 Measurement.

(a) The measurement of the required buffer on land adjacent to a water requiring a fifty (50) foot average width and a thirty (30) foot minimum width buffer must be from the top or crown of the bank. Where there is



no defined bank, measurement must be from the edge of the normal water level in accordance with Board guidance.

(b) The measurement of the required buffer on land adjacent to a water requiring a sixteen and a half (16.5) foot minimum width buffer must be from the top or crown of bank in the same manner as for measuring the vegetated grass strip under Minn. Stat. §103E.021 in accordance with Board guidance.

**4.3. Use of Buffer Area.** A buffer may not be used for cultivation farming but may be mowed, hayed, grazed or otherwise harvested, provided permanent growth of perennial vegetation is maintained, except as provided in subsections 4.4.(g) and 4.5 consistent with Board guidance.

**4.4 Exemptions.** The requirement of subsection 4.1 does not apply to land that is:

- (a) enrolled in the federal Conservation Reserve Program; or
- (b) used as a public or private water access or recreational use area including stairways, landings, picnic areas, access paths, beach and watercraft access areas, and permitted water-oriented structures as provided in the shoreland model standards and criteria adopted pursuant to section 103F.211 or as provided for in an approved local government shoreland ordinance; or
- (c) covered by a road, trail, building, or other structures; or
- (e) regulated by a national pollutant discharge elimination system/state disposal system (NPDES/SDS) permit under Minnesota Rules, chapter 7090, and provides water resources riparian protection, in any of the following categories: (i) municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4); (ii) construction storm water (CSW); or (iii) industrial storm water (ISW); or
- (f) part of a water-inundation cropping system; or
- (g) in a temporary nonvegetated condition due to drainage tile installation and maintenance, alfalfa or other perennial crop or plant seeding, or a construction or conservation project authorized by a federal, state or local government unit; or
- (h) any other exemption as outlined in Minn. Stat. §103F.48, subd. 5

**4.5. Alternative practices.** An owner of land that is used for cultivation farming may demonstrate compliance with subsection 4.1 by establishing and maintaining an alternative riparian water quality practice(s), or combination of structural, vegetative, and management practice(s) which provide water quality protection comparable to the water quality protection provided by a required buffer as defined in subsections 4.1 to 4.3, based on:

- (a) the Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide; or
- (b) other practices adopted by the Board.



## 5.0 COMPLIANCE DETERMINATIONS

- 5.1 Compliance determinations.** Compliance status will be determined by the SWCD on a parcel basis as identified by a unique locally defined property identification number or description and the compliance status of each bank, or edge of a water body on an individual parcel will be determined independently.
- 5.2 Compliance determination appeal.** A landowner, agent, or operator may appeal a compliance determination made by the SWCD to the Board of Soil and Water Resources through the process outlined in Minn. Stat. §103F.48, subd. 9.
- 5.3. Identification of Potential Noncompliance.** Upon identifying a potentially noncompliant landowner or property, the SWCD may consult with the County to determine the appropriate course of action to confirm compliance status. This may include communication with the landowner or operator, inspection, or other appropriate steps. After investigation, the SWCD may issue a notice of noncompliance to the County. If the SWCD does not issue such a notice, the County will not pursue a compliance or enforcement action under Minnesota Statutes §103F.48 and subsection 6.2.
- 5.3.1** At any time during this process, the landowner may provide documentation of compliance to the SWCD. The SWCD will evaluate the documentation, or review the buffer and/or alternative practices to determine if the parcel is in compliance and issue its determination in writing to the landowner. The SWCD may issue a validation of compliance if applicable and requested by the landowner. The SWCD must send a copy of a noncompliance determination to the County and the Board.
- 5.4. Notice of Noncompliance.** The County will initiate an action for noncompliance with section 4.0 when it receives a notice of landowner noncompliance from the SWCD under Minn. Stat. §103F.48, subd. 7. On receipt of an SWCD notice of noncompliance, the County will issue the landowner of record a notice of noncompliance that will:
- (a) describe the nature of the violation;
  - (b) describe corrective actions to be taken;
  - (c) provide a practical timeline of intermediate or final dates for correction;
  - (d) provide a compliance standard against which it will judge the corrective action; and
  - (e) a statement that failure to respond to this notice will result in the assessment of financial penalties.

The County in its judgment also may name as a responsible party a tenant or other person with control over that part of the property subject to section 4.0. The County may deliver or transmit the notice of noncompliance by any means reasonably determined to reach the responsible party or parties, and will document receipt. However, a failure to document receipt will not preclude the County from demonstrating receipt or knowledge of the notice of noncompliance in an enforcement proceeding under section 6.0. The County must send a copy of the notice to the SWCD and the Board.

**5.4.1** At any time during this process, the landowner or responsible party or parties may provide documentation of compliance to the County. In addition, the landowner or responsible party or parties may supply information in support of a request to modify a corrective action or the timeline for compliance. On the basis of any such

submittal or at its own discretion, the County in writing may modify the corrective action or timeline for compliance, and will deliver or transmit the modified action and timeline in accordance with this section. The County should determine if the noncompliance has been fully corrected and issue its determination in writing to the landowner. The SWCD may issue a validation of compliance if requested by the landowner.

5.4.2 A notice of noncompliance is not considered a final decision subject to appeal.

## 6.0 ENFORCEMENT

6.1 **Enforcement options.** A landowner who does not comply with the notice of noncompliance issued under section 5 shall be subject to:

- (a) criminal prosecution for a violation of the Redwood County Zoning Ordinance as described in Section 28, subd. 1 of said Ordinance; and/or
- (b) the issuance of an administrative penalty order under Minn. Stat. §103B.101, subdivision 12a and Minn. Stat. §103F.48, subd. 7 and the procedures provided in this section.

6.2. **Administrative Penalty Order.**

(a) **Initial Violation.** The penalty for a landowner that has not previously been the recipient of an administrative penalty order will be assessed on the following schedule:

- (a) \$50 per parcel per month for six (6) months (180 days) following the correction period; and
- (b) \$250 per parcel per month for after six (6) months (181 days) following the correction period.

The correction period ends eleven months after the notice of noncompliance was issued. A modification of the corrective actions and timeline for compliance will extend the correction period only as to a modification that imposes a substantial new action or significantly accelerates the completion date for an action.

(b) **Repeat violation.** The penalty for a landowner that has previously been the recipient of an administrative penalty order will be assessed on the following schedule:

- (a) \$50 per parcel per day for 180 days following the correction period; and
- (b) \$250 per parcel per day for after 181 days following the correction period.

The correction period ends eleven months after the notice of noncompliance was issued. A modification of the corrective actions and timeline for compliance will extend the correction period only as to a modification that imposes a substantial new action or significantly accelerates the completion date for an action.

6.2.1. **Order.** The APO will state:

- i. The facts constituting a violation of the water resources riparian protection requirements;
- ii. The statute and/or ordinance that has been violated;
- iii. Prior efforts to work with the landowner to resolve the violation;
- iv. The amount of the penalty to be imposed and the date the penalty will begin to be assessed, and the date that payment of the penalty is due; and
- v. The responsible party(ies) right to appeal the order.

6.2.2 All or part of the penalty may be forgiven on the basis of diligent correction of noncompliance following issuance of the APO by the landowner or responsible party(ies).

6.2.3 A copy of the APO must be sent to the SWCD and the Board.

6.2.4 An APO that is not submitted for appeal to the executive director within 30 days of receipt by the landowner is final.

### 6.3 Administrative Penalty Order Procedures

6.3.1. Statute of limitations. According to Minn. Stat. §541.07, clause (2), the County has two years in which to commence an administrative penalty order action after the violation is discovered. The goal is to complete the action as soon as reasonably practical, recognizing that situations on which data must be gathered, field investigations must be completed and/or modeling must be performed will require adequate time to complete the work and communicate with the landowner(s) involved.

6.3.2 . Compliance verification. Once a landowner has submitted written evidence of correction of the violation, compliance must be verified. The County, in coordination with the SWCD will:

Review and evaluate all information related to the APO to determine if the violation has been corrected;

Verify compliance by site visit, re-inspection, examination of documentation, or other means as may be reasonable under the facts of the case; and

Document compliance verification.

6.3.3. Right to appeal. An administrative penalty order may be appealed to the Board in accordance with Minn. Stat. 103F.48, subd. 9, and will be as provided therein

6.3.4 Penalty due, interest assessed. Unless the violator requests an appeal of the APO within 30 days of receipt of the APO, the penalty is due and payable to the County as specified in the APO. If the violator submits written evidence within 30 days of the date specified in the APO, which may include a validation of compliance issued by the SWCD, that the violation was corrected, but the County determines it was not fully corrected, the violator has 20 days to pay the penalty after receipt of a letter of determination from the County that the violation has not been fully corrected.

Interest will accrue at the rate established pursuant to Minn. Stat 549.09 beginning on the 31<sup>st</sup> day after issuance of the order, or the 21<sup>st</sup> day after the landowner receives the letter of determination that the violation has not been fully corrected.

6.3.5 Referral for collection of penalty. All penalties and interest assessed under an APO must be paid by the violator within the specified time and made payable to the County. Any penalty or interest not received in the specified time may be collected by lawful means.

6.3.6 Reporting and documentation. Effective compliance reporting and documentation will ensure that proper enforcement action is taken, and that a record is maintained of these actions. When the County identifies a violation of the water resources riparian protection requirements, staff will follow record keeping procedures to assess and note the following to the extent known or available:



Cause of the violation;

Magnitude and duration of the violation;

Whether the violation presents an actual or imminent risk to public health and safety, or the natural resources of the state;

Past violations;

Efforts by the SWCD, County, watershed district or the Board to assist the landowner to become compliant, including written and oral communications with the landowner; and

Past and present corrective action efforts by the landowner.

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