



# FORESTRY Leaflets

December 2020

WQ-10

## A Guide to the Forest Harvest Requirements of the Consolidated Riparian Buffer Rules for:

***Catawba River & Mainstem Lakes,  
Randleman Lake Watershed,  
Neuse River Basin, and  
Tar-Pamlico River Basin.***

On June 15, 2020 revised Forest Harvest Requirements for these four Buffer Rules became effective. The new consolidated rule is [15A NCAC 02B .0612](#). This Leaflet does not provide legal advice or final interpretation of these Buffer Rules. Contact the appropriate [Regional Office](#) of the NCDEQ-[Div. of Water Resources](#) (NC-DWR) for guidance.

**>>> There are different/separate Buffer Rules for the Goose Creek Watershed and Jordan Lake Watershed. <<<**

The North Carolina Forest Service (NCFS) can assist by determining which streams/waterways require each Buffer Rule. Contact the appropriate NCFS [District Office](#) or [Water Quality Forester](#) to request this free service.

### 1. Where the Consolidated Buffer Rule Applies

- ✓ Along the margins of the **Catawba River** and its mainstem lakes; starting at Lake James, continuing southward to the NC/SC state line.
- ✓ Along designated or mapped 'blueline' streams and bodies of water (see pg.2, section 2) in the **Randleman Lake watershed**, and the **Neuse River basin**, and the **Tar-Pamlico River basin**.



**NOTE: *In Randleman Lake Watershed, this Buffer Rule is also required on un-mapped streams that are Intermittent or Perennial; and required along ditches that outlet into an Intermittent or Perennial stream.***

#### Exemptions

The Buffer Rule does not apply to the following features in these 4 river basins or watersheds:

- × Any ephemeral stream (sometimes called a slough, swale, gully, draw, hollow, or drain).
- × Man-made ditch or canal that is not intended for water navigation or boat access [*except in Randleman Lake watershed, see NOTE above*].
- × Man-made pond or lake that is located outside of a natural drainageway.
- × Agricultural/Farm pond.

**Contact the NC-DWR for clarifications of these exemptions.**

#### Beaver Impoundments



**Beaver ponds are not exempted.** On beaver impoundments (beaver ponds, beaver swamps, etc.), the Buffer Rule Zone must begin at the water's edge, even if there is standing timber out in the beaver swamp. If you wish to breach the beaver dam, let the water drain off, and wait for the stream to re-establish its natural course; then you can start the Buffer Rule Zone along the re-established stream channel. If machinery is needed to breach the dam, then a permit may be needed. **Contact the NC-DWR for guidance before disturbing the beaver dam.**

## 2. Types of Streams & Waterbodies that Require this Buffer Rule

This Buffer Rule applies to ‘blueline’ Intermittent streams, ‘blueline’ Perennial streams, ponds, lakes, and estuaries that are approximately shown on the most recently published version of either: (1) a NRCS county **soil survey manuscript**, or (2) a USGS 1:24000 quad [7.5-minute] **topographic map**.

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**\*\*Web Soil Survey and ArcGIS map layers are not acceptable.\*\***
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### Where to Download Acceptable Maps:

NRCS Soil Survey Manuscripts: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/surveylist/soils/survey/state/?stateId=NC>  
*The NCFS has a step-by-step guide (linked below) to locate and download PDF scans of soil survey maps:*  
[https://www.ncforestservice.gov/water\\_quality/pdf/soilMaps.pdf](https://www.ncforestservice.gov/water_quality/pdf/soilMaps.pdf)

USGS Topo Maps: <https://ngmdb.usgs.gov/topoview/viewer/#4/39.98/-100.06>  
*Make sure you download the most recent version of the 1:24000 map.*

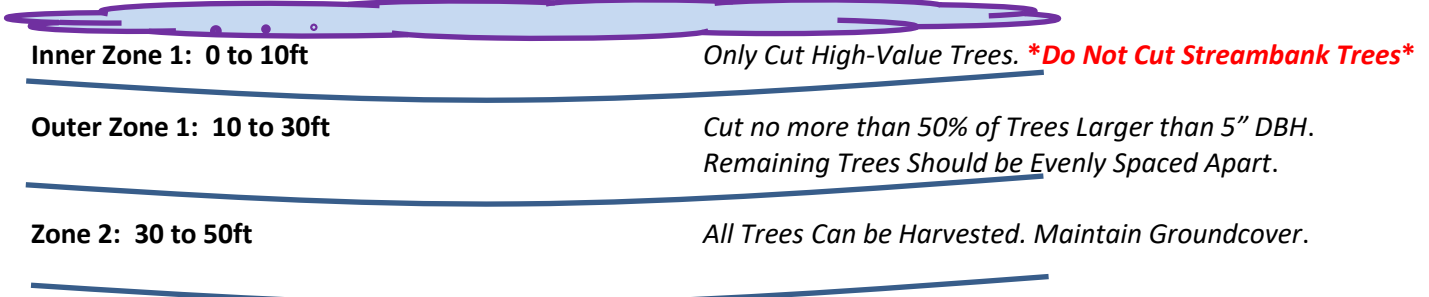
## 3. Buffer Rule Zone Widths and Starting Points

**The entire Buffer Rule Zone is 50 feet wide, divided into Zone 1 and Zone 2:**

- Zone 1 is sub-divided: Inner Zone 1 = 0 to 10 foot mark (10 feet wide).  
 Outer Zone 1 = 10 to 30 foot mark (20 feet wide).
- Zone 2 = 30 to 50 foot mark (20 feet wide).

**The Buffer Rule Zone is measured horizontally on a line perpendicular to the surface water:**

- Zone 1 - For streams: Begin at the most landward limit of the top of bank or the rooted herbaceous vegetation, and extend landward a distance of 30 feet on all sides of the stream (include a radius ‘bulb’ at head of stream).
- Zone 1 - For ponds, lakes, reservoirs: Begin at the normal water level and extend landward a distance of 30 feet.
- Zone 1 - For the 20 Coastal NC counties: Begin at the most landward limit of the normal high water level or the normal water level, and extend landward a distance of 30 feet.
- Zone 2 - For all sites: Zone 2 begins at the outer edge of Zone 1 and extends outward 20 feet and shall consist of a stable, vegetated area. Ground cover must allow water infiltration and diffusion.



**Landowner BMP Tip:** For maximum protection of water quality and efficient logging, consider having the timber buyer and logger keep all trees un-cut in all of Zone 1 (0 - 30 ft).

## 4. Harvesting Timber in the Buffer Rule Zone

- ✓ All forest harvesting must comply with the FPGs. The Buffer Rules do not replace the FPGs.
- ✓ Timber felling shall be directed away from the stream or waterbody.
- ✓ Skidding shall be directed away from the stream or waterbody, and shall be done in a manner that minimizes soil disturbance and prevents the creation of channels or ruts.


 x **No log decks or sawmill sites are allowed in the entire 50-foot Buffer Rule Zone.**




### Harvesting in any part of Zone 1: 0 to 30 feet.

**Selective timber harvesting is only allowed in Zone 1 of the Buffer Rule if:**


- The tract has a forest management plan that was prepared or approved by a Registered Forester; or,
- The parcel is enrolled in that county's Present-Use Value (PUV) tax deferral program for forestry use.

Allowed:	Selective timber harvest that minimizes disturbance to the soil and remaining vegetation.
Allowed with Restrictions:	Tracked or wheeled vehicles are allowed in Zone 1 for harvesting timber where there is no other practical alternative.
 <b>Prohibited:</b>	<b>No tracked or wheeled vehicles for site prep.</b>

#### **Inner Zone 1: 0 to 10 foot mark**

Allowed:	Selective harvesting of only "High Value" trees.
Allowed with Restrictions:	For Pine species, High Value is: DBH is 14" or larger; Or stump diameter is 18" or larger. For non-Pine species, High Value is: DBH is 16" or larger; Or stump diameter is 24" or larger.
 <b>Prohibited:</b>	<b>No cutting of any tree that has exposed primary roots visible in the streambank.</b>

#### **Outer Zone 1: 10 to 30 foot mark**

Allowed:	Selective harvesting of any tree with a DBH larger than 5".
Allowed with Restrictions:	Harvest no more than 50% of the trees that are larger than 5" DBH. Remaining trees must be as evenly spaced apart as possible. Re-entry for natural forest is allowed every 15 years. Re-entry for plantation forest is allowed every 5 years.
 <b>Prohibited:</b>	<b>No cutting of trees smaller than 5" DBH. No clearcutting allowed in Zone 1.</b>

### Harvesting in Zone 2: 30 to 50 feet.

All timber harvesting and forest regeneration is allowed, so long as ground cover is established and maintained to provide for diffusion and infiltration of surface runoff.

## 5. Other Forest Management Activities in the Entire 50-foot Buffer Zone

#### Allowed

- ✓ Individual trees may be treated to maintain or improve their health, form, or vigor.
- ✓ Removal of individual trees that are in danger of causing damage to structure or human life.
- ✓ Natural regeneration of forest vegetation, and planting of trees, shrubs or ground cover; provided that soil disturbance is minimized.

#### Allowed with Restrictions

- Harvest of dead or infected trees or application of pesticides as necessary to prevent or control the spread of tree pest and disease infestation. Must be approved by the NCFS, and the NCFS must notify the NC-DWR within 60 days.
- Prescribed burns are allowed when conducted for forest management purposes.
- A one-time fertilizer application at agronomic rates to establish replanted vegetation. No runoff from the fertilizer application is allowed into surface water.

*Prepared by the North Carolina Forest Service, a division of the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Steve Troxler, Commissioner. This is a print-as-needed publication available at: [www.ncforestservice.gov](http://www.ncforestservice.gov). The NCFS is an equal opportunity employer. Its programs, activities and employment practices are available to all people regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, handicap, genetic information or political affiliation.*