



# Buffers: Protecting the Water's Edge

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## Did you know you have a buffer in your backyard?

### What is a buffer?

A buffer is a strip of undisturbed native vegetation at the edge of a lake, stream or wetland. Many neighborhoods in the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District (PLSLWD) have wetlands and/or streams within them. These water resources add beauty, open space and wildlife habitat to the neighborhood. In order to help protect these important resources, the PLSLWD and local cities require that wetlands and streams in new developments be surrounded by buffer strips. Buffers help protect wetlands and streams from erosion, runoff and associated pollution.

### Why are they important?

Buffers are an important part of protecting our small wetlands and streams, which in turn protects larger water bodies like Prior and Spring lakes. Buffer vegetation filters out pollutants before they reach the water, and buffers also infiltrate (or soak up) some stormwater, which helps reduce downstream flooding. To perform their job effectively, it is important that these buffers are not mowed, dumped in, or used as a compost site.

### Mission:

*To manage & preserve the water resources of the Prior Lake-Spring Lake Watershed District to the best of our ability using input from our communities, sound engineering practices, and our ability to efficiently fund beneficial projects which transcend political jurisdictions.*

### Did you know...

- Wetlands help reduce flooding by providing storage area for runoff.
- Wetlands help clean runoff water before it reaches our lakes and streams.
- Many of the buffers that have been established by the PLSLWD are themselves protected by conservation easements.
- Buffer signs, like the one on the front, help mark the boundaries of the buffer areas within the PLSLWD.



### Contact us at:

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### Other benefits of buffers -

Buffers are valuable to our communities in many ways such as:

- 1) Water infiltration (soaking into the ground)
- 2) Water filtration (think of it as a Brita® filter before the water gets to the lakes)
- 3) Providing a habitat for waterfowl like ducks and heron, as well as songbirds.
- 4) Buffers provide an excellent opportunity to showcase native vegetation.
- 5) And many more!

### So, what CAN I do in a buffer area?

There are many things that homeowners can do to enhance the buffer area and make it more pleasant for the homeowner, and even more functional.

- 1) Plant native flowers and shrubs (in some cases, however, the city must approve this)
- 2) Maintain an unimproved access—if you need to get to the wetland.
- 3) Install birdhouses, feeders, and other forms of wildlife habitat.
- 4) Control and remove harmful invasives like thistle and buckthorn.

### What can I do to help protect our local wetlands and streams?

- 1) Make sure the wetlands and streams, and the buffer areas surrounding them, are kept clean and pristine by leaving the area undisturbed.
- 2) Keep the signs in place so visitors and future homeowners know the importance of these buffers.
- 3) Tell others about the importance of wetlands and how they can help to preserve them!

**Contact the PLSLWD office to see how you can help protect  
and improve our lakes, streams and wetlands!**