



**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**



This streamside features a variety of grasses and shrubs to protect water quality and keep the stream shaded.

Affordable Streamside Improvements

Farmers and ranchers value clean water and healthy natural resources. Some may think they can't afford to improve their streamside areas to help protect water quality. However, improving streamside vegetation can be simple and inexpensive.

Healthy streamside areas are an important part of achieving clean water. Oregon's agricultural production and other natural resource uses rely on clean water. To help keep water clean, Oregon law requires farmers and ranchers to allow streamside vegetation to establish. Improving streamside areas can also be a low-cost way to address problems that can be expensive for farmers.

Many producers have improved the streamside areas on their own. However, technical and financial help is available. Local Soil Water Conservation Districts (SWCD), Watershed Councils, or Oregon State University (OSU) Extension can help in creating and carrying out a plan. Financial assistance, cost-share, and grants are available to help make these plans become a reality.

Low-Cost Improvements

- Retain trees, like willows, alders, and cottonwoods, along the streamside areas to shade streams and provide wildlife habitat.
- Pull cropping back from bank to allow riparian vegetation to establish.
- Exclude livestock from riparian area with temporary or permanent fencing. This allows a more robust riparian buffer to grow.
- Leave snags in waterways to encourage fish and wildlife habitat.

Funding Sources

The Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board (OWEB) is a state agency that offers a variety of grant programs. The grants help Oregonians take care of local streams, rivers, wetlands, and natural areas.

Another popular funding source is the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) through the Farm Service Agency, or FSA. Land in CREP is voluntarily retired to protect streamside areas and wetlands. This can be a great way to put low yield areas into conservation and get paid.

There are cost-share programs available from FSA and OWEB for restoration work. Paired together with CREP funding, a large portion of the work cost can be covered. CREP participants receive annual rental payments for the land placed in reserve based on factors like local rental rates and soil productivity. As of 2024, Oregon CREP had nearly 44,000 acres enrolled.

Farmers and ranchers can protect water quality by making improvements to streamside areas. Improvements like stabilizing streambanks, filtering nutrients, and trapping sediment are great options. These improvements can also protect valuable farmland by preventing erosion.

All the potential benefits can outweigh the cost. Streamside areas can provide high quality forage. With proper grazing management, livestock producers can improve animal health and weight gain. Practices like cross fencing for rotational grazing and providing off-stream water can pay for themselves. Calves can gain more weight and cows are easier to take care of during the winter months. In addition, a robust streamside area can prevent erosion and reduce weeds on your land.

Oregonians value the many benefits that healthy streamside vegetation provides to water quality. Streamside areas can add value to an agricultural operation. The benefits of improving streamside areas may outweigh the costs.

Why invest in healthy streamside areas?

- Improve forage for livestock
- Cool stream temperatures
- Provide habitat for fish and wildlife
- Absorb runoff and filter pollutants
- Protect and retain valuable soil



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Water Quality Program
635 Capitol St NE
Salem, OR 97301-2532 USA
503.986.4700 | ODA.direct/AgWQ