



**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

Field Borders

Oregon's agricultural industry works to address public concerns about water quality. Often several different practices may be used to meet a water quality requirement. Some practices are inexpensive compared to the cost of losing soil to a ditch or nearby stream. One such practice is the installation of field borders.

A field border is a strip of vegetative cover, usually grass, around a field perimeter. A field border can reduce the sediment load in water leaving the field. Different types of vegetation can be used for field borders depending on the crop type, rotation length, and an operation's management plan.

WHY PLANT A BORDER?

Sediment caused by soil erosion is a major source of pollution to our state's waterways. In addition, soil lost through erosion is a valuable resource. Soil particles that erode from fields often carry contaminants. Field borders are one way to protect against soil erosion.

Borders can slow runoff from fields and capture soil before it enters streams. Rill and gully erosion can be prevented with field borders. Field borders can also be used to meet required field setback distances for manure and chemical applications.

INSTALLATION SUGGESTIONS

- Consider planting a grass species with a deep root system that produces dense foliage. This type of vegetation is able to capture eroded soil and hold it in place.
- Allow an adequate distance from the edge of a field for a field border. Some nursery growers recommend a width of two or more traffic lanes, depending on the slope of the field. However, do not use the field border as an access road.
- Provide irrigation to newly planted borders if rainfall is not sufficient for germination and establishment.
- Use species in your border that are tolerant of silting and chemicals applied to your crop.
- Combine tall and short vegetation in the field border. Various heights of vegetation can capture more sediment than one height.



This Christmas tree field has a large grassed field buffer. Riparian vegetation is establishing.

This is an example of a newly planted riparian area.



BORDER UPKEEP

Here are a few things to think about when planning the upkeep of your field border:

- Repair damage caused by severe storm events.
- Remove sediment accumulations at the field border and cropland interface. Do this when sediment reaches a depth of 6 inches or more.
- When turning farm equipment, shut off sprayers and raise tillage implement to avoid damage to field borders.
- Field borders should not be used as access roads. Vehicle traffic, especially in the winter, will damage the border and can increase erosion problems.
- Repair and reseed damaged areas.
- Control noxious weeds and invasive plants.
- Fertilize and mow borders to maintain plant vigor.
- Fill and reseed gullies and rills that develop in the border. Maintain vegetation so that it provides at least 80 percent groundcover year-round.

RIPARIAN AREAS

Extra protection should be given to the interface between fields and waterways. These areas are considered riparian areas.

Retain trees, shrubs, and understory vegetation along riparian areas. This robust vegetation can prevent erosion, trap sediment, and filter runoff. Vegetated riparian areas also provide shade to streams, which prevents solar warming of the water.

To protect riparian areas, plant a field border between croplands and riparian areas.

TO LEARN MORE

You can visit ODA's Agricultural Water Quality webpage to find more resources. Scan the QR code below to visit the webpage.



Your local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) can help implement and fund practices such as a field border. Scan the QR code below to access the SWCD directory.



**OREGON
DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE**

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