



Does your property back up to Town property that is in a natural state? Do you wonder why it is that way? It's probably in a stream or river buffer area that is required to be left naturalized under not just Town but also State law.

Streamside buffers are an important part of stream ecosystems because they decrease pollution, control erosion, and provide wildlife habitat. Also called riparian buffers, streamside buffers are naturally occurring vegetated areas that run alongside streams and other aquatic systems such as lakes, ponds, and wetlands.

Streamside buffers also protect water quality by stabilizing the banks of the stream, which helps secure sediments and decrease turbidity. When natural vegetation buffers around streams are removed, erosion occurs. Stream erosion is problematic for many reasons, erosion causes sedimentation and siltation downstream, erosion degrades wildlife habitat, and eroded banks are unable to control flooding. Streamside buffers help control erosion in two ways: below the surface of the water, the roots from vegetation stabilize stream banks and above the surface, the vegetation lessens the energy from the flowing water.

For wildlife, streamside buffers are important because they provide habitat and food. Habitat loss is a major problem for numerous species of animals including amphibians, birds, fish, and mammals. Streamside buffers are a sanctuary for animals because they provide cover, water, and food, all of which are necessary for survival. When properly implemented, the buffers can increase biodiversity and act as a corridor by connecting fragmented habitat. For aquatic species, streamside buffers are important because they provide shade, which decreases water temperatures and increases, dissolved oxygen in the water.

Cutting trees or clearing brush in this buffer area is illegal! Please do not go onto Town property – or any property other than your own - and clear or cut trees down. That's trespassing and could significantly damage the Braselton ecosystem. Please be aware that even if you own property along a stream there is a protected stream buffer established by both local and State Law. The size of the buffer may vary. You may contact the Town Environmental Specialist as to the specific buffer limits for a specific stream. But remember, in these buffers, only limited disturbance is allowed. And limited disturbance is that which includes leaving a protective vegetative cover that serves to protect water quality and aquatic habitat and a natural canopy that is left in sufficient quantity to keep shade on the stream bed.

Questions? Email the Braselton Environmental Specialist, Yvette Wise at [ywise@braselton.net](mailto:ywise@braselton.net)