

Buffer Decision Support Tool Use

September 6, 2017

Purpose

To provide guidance and considerations when using the Alternative Practice Decision Support Tool.

Decision Support Tool Guidance

- This tool is designed to inform local resource planners and landowners when making decisions on installing alternative practices. SWCD Practitioners should not rely solely on the results of the tool.
 - It is designed to illustrate alternative options consistent with policy considerations of the Buffer Law and **is not intended to** justify the removal of buffers in any location nor does it circumvent any local ordinances or 103E requirements that it may not take into consideration.
- Removal efficiencies of the various alternative BMPs require that the BMP in question is both installed and maintained according to NRCS practice standards for all practices except the reduced width buffer option and management conditions.
 - Reduced width buffers must meet vegetative requirements of the buffer law.
- As a whole, the tool is intended to function best when significant areas of the parcel ARE NOT entering the water feature through concentrated flow. (I.E. Scrape swales) This reduces the effective area of the buffer and is not accounted for in the estimations provided by the tool.
 - In situations with very flat (0-2.5% slope) landscapes and concentrated flows or scrape swales practitioners should first use Common Alternative Practice #4b or #5 depending on the buffer width requirement to address those areas of concentrated flow.
 - In situations with steeper landscapes (>2.5% slope) a first consideration should be to address areas of natural or manmade concentrated flow and potential gully formation which may directly impact the buffer effectiveness.
- In locations with heavily eroding banks use of the prescribed buffer with deeper rooted vegetation will generally provide greater bank stability than a reduced width buffer.
- Where gullies are forming into the field from the water body consider addressing those areas of concern first.
- The tool does not address all situations in the landscape nor is there evidence to support reductions for all BMPs in some landscapes.
 - As noted in the Decision Tool Summary, some BMPs are not listed as having removal efficiencies in some agro eco regions or specific slope conditions.
 - This does not mean those BMPs don't exist or could not be used. An expected reduction value of 0.00 either implies that there was limited research to support an effective reduction in that specific landscape, more user input is required, or BMP is not suitable for this specific landscape.

