

Streamside Zones

Background

The streamside zone consists of the aquatic ecosystem, riparian ecosystem, and closely associated plant and animal communities. This area includes at a minimum: areas adjacent to perennial streams and perennial waterbodies, wetlands, 100-year floodplains and a zone on each side of all perennial streams and lakes. These areas will be actively managed to protect and enhance, where possible, the distinctive resource values and characteristics dependent on or associated with these systems.

Streamside zones determine the nature, quality, and health of many components of a forest ecosystem because they represent the transition zone between aquatic and terrestrial communities. They are a primary influence on whether water quality is poor or excellent, whether stream fisheries habitat is rich with and abundance of large woody debris, whether high quality food and cover are available for terrestrial animals, and whether stream associated plant communities are maintained.

High quality streamside zones are those that maintain natural hydrologic functioning, and optimize precipitation infiltration and runoff so as to enhance stream stability and minimize erosion. Instream flow is maintained at levels necessary to perpetuate diverse communities of aquatic organisms in a healthy state.

Restoration activities within streamside zones will be conducted to improve the structural and compositional diversity of riparian area plant and animal communities without negatively influencing stream temperature, natural hydrologic functioning, or travel corridor quality.

Desired Conditions

- Areas along streams and rivers and around reservoirs, lakes and ponds are healthy, functioning, and contain a variety of forest compositions and structures representative of the existing forest community. Streamside zones vary based on site specific conditions that consider geology, soils, vegetation, and water flows.
- Streamside zones are dominated by native vegetation that provides shading to the streams and filters sediments and nutrients from upslope areas as well as provides potential large woody debris for fisheries habitat. Native trees in these zones influence water temperature and provide in-stream habitat and nutrients.

Standards

- Management activities within 100 feet of (or perimeter around) perennial waterbodies (streams, lakes, and ponds, but also including perennial springs, seeps, bogs, etc.) shall be for the benefit of riparian associated species and their habitat. This area may be reduced to not less than 30 feet after site-specific evaluation by a project-specific interdisciplinary team.

- Management activities within 15 feet of (or perimeter around) intermittent waterbodies (streams, vernal pools, seep, springs, etc.) shall be for the benefit of aquatic or terrestrial habitats required by riparian-associated species occupying those areas.
- Vegetation management within 30 feet of either side (or perimeter) of perennial waterbodies, or within 15' of either side (or perimeter) of intermittent waterbodies shall be to restore riparian characteristics and function (e.g. non-native invasive species management, enhanced plant and animal diversity, bird nesting and foraging habitat, and bat roosting and foraging habitat). Such management activities will be designed at the project level, but shall not compromise core riparian functions such as water temperature regulation, sediment transport, and streambank stability.
- In areas occupied by the Indiana bat (*Myotis sodalis*) or northern long-eared bat (*M. septentrionalis*), foraging and roosting habitat (i.e. a particular canopy density and snag characteristics) along intermittent and perennial streams shall be maintained in accordance with the Biological Opinion for these species.
- Within identified streamside zones, allow chemical treatment for prioritized non-native invasive plant species infestations with aquatic-labeled herbicides and/or adjuvants. Applicators will use guards on the end of sprayer wands when applying along stream edges and banks. All herbicide will be sprayed away from any water source.
- Avoid ground disturbing activities, such as skid roads and trails, temporary or permanent roads, log landings and loading areas, and waste disposal areas unless satisfactory mitigation measures have been designed.

Guidelines

- New road and trail construction should be limited in streamside zones to minimize effects of management (e.g. sedimentation of habitats, increased water temperature) on aquatic habitat and populations. Additionally, existing roads and trails should be maintained and decommissioned as appropriate in this zone.

See also: Aquatic systems, Forest Health and Invasive Species, Terrestrial Ecozones, and Water