



<http://www.harpethconservancy.org/programs/restoration/riparian>

The riparian zone is an important interface between a waterway and the surrounding land. They provide many environmental and recreational benefits to streams, groundwater systems, and downstream land areas. Riparian zones help dispel stream energy. The many curves, bends, or windings of a river, combined with the nearby vegetation and root systems, reduces the flow and the erosive force of the water. This slowing helps capture nutrient-laden sediment, and soils in this area tend to absorb water during the wet seasons and slowly release moisture into the stream, which buffers the effect of peak runoff and keeps streams flowing longer.

Often, interactions between shallow groundwater in the riparian zone and surface water in the river help regulate stream temperature in ways beneficial to fish and other aquatic creatures. Streambank vegetation is crucial in providing shade which aids in cooling surface water temperatures as well. Riparian zones also provide important habitat and wildlife corridors, which enables organisms to move along the river system and prevents communities from becoming isolated. The vegetation growing along streams, rivers, lakes, ponds, and wetlands can also provide forage for wildlife and livestock.

From a human aspect, riparian zones contribute to higher property values through pleasant scenery and desirable views, and they improve enjoyment for footpaths and bikeways through supporting scenic road networks. Although these zones comprise only a very small portion of the environment, they are a central component of a healthy watershed and provide an important ecological buffer between the water and the land.