



Buffer Law: Alternative Practices Overview

March 13, 2017

What Statute says:

A landowner owning property adjacent to a water body identified in a buffer protection map and whose property is used for cultivation farming may meet the requirements... ..by adopting an alternative riparian water quality practice, or combination of structural, vegetative, and management practices, based on the Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office Technical Guide or other practices approved by the board, that provide water quality protection comparable to the buffer protection for the water body that the property abuts.

What should be considered when evaluating an alternative practice?

NRCS Field Office Technical Guide practices are identified on the [BWSR website](#) and standards are detailed on the [NRCS website](#).

A comparable benefit may be achieved by practices or combinations of practices other than the prescribed perennially vegetated buffer that prevent or reduce erosion or provide water quality treatment for runoff, including stability of soils, shores and banks.

Roles

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs) have the authority and expertise to work with landowners to determine what alternative practices may best fit on their land and verify compliance.

BWSR's responsibility is to support local decision-making and assure consistency. In some situations, a SWCD may request additional input from other field staff or technical experts. BWSR's role is to provide guidance to ensure local staff are successful when working with landowners.

Examples of Common Alternative Practices

While the law doesn't direct BWSR to prescribe alternative practices, many groups (including local governments, legislators, and landowners) have asked our agency to develop and provide examples of common alternative practices scenarios to increase the efficiency of landowner assistance provided by SWCDs. Our goal is common sense options by which the SWCDs can work with landowners to implement a flexible and repeatable approach.

BWSR's common alternative practice examples include:

1. Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program
2. USDA Practice Standard Filter Strip (393)
3. Dry – Grassed Waterway
4. Berm with negative slope
5. Buffer plus conservation tillage

Plus: Local action

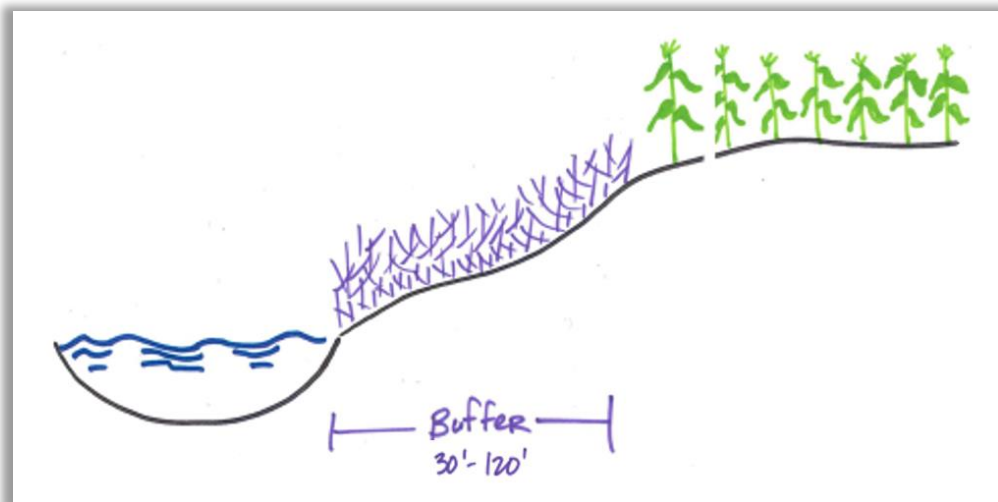
These examples are illustrated on the following pages.

Common Alternative Practice Examples

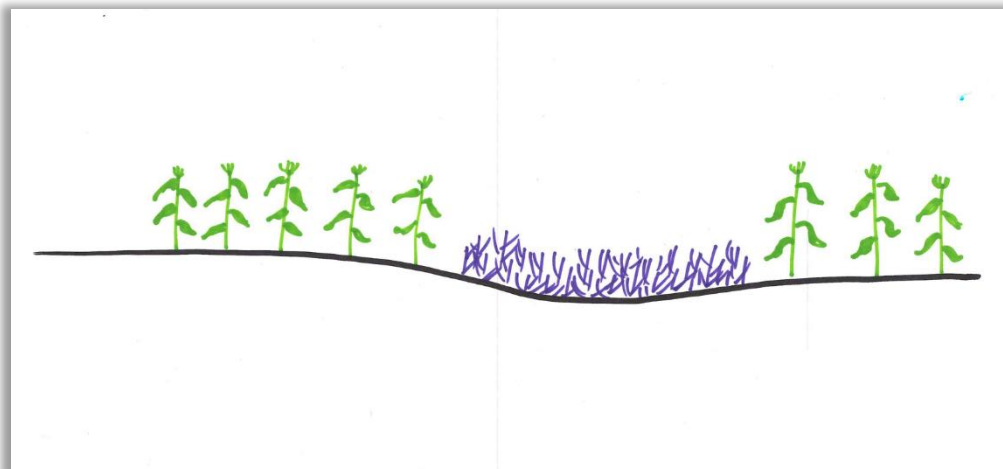
Minnesota Agricultural Water Quality Certification Program



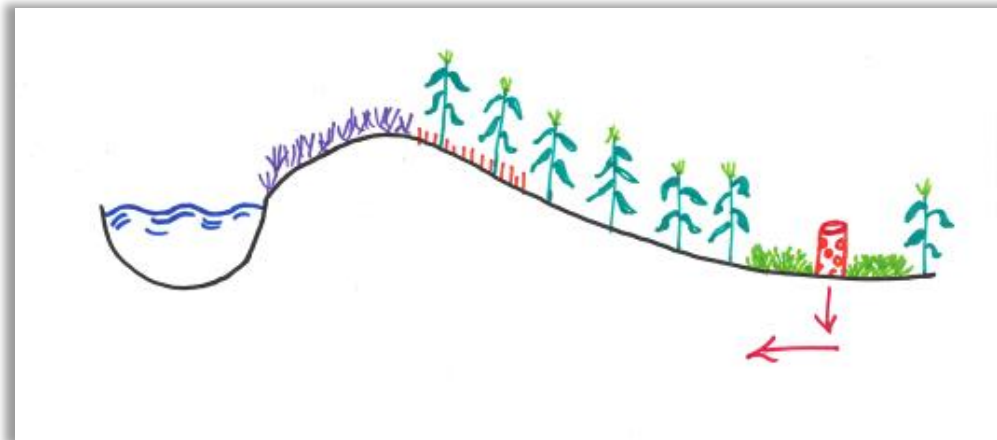
USDA Practice Standard Filter Strips (393)



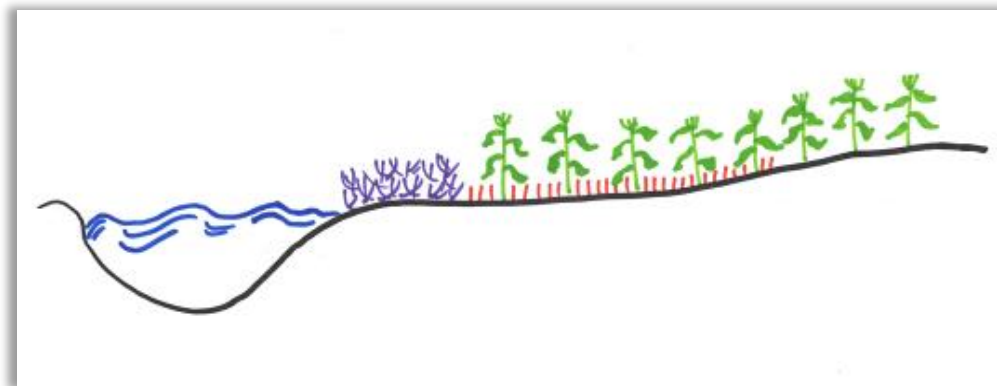
Dry – Grassed Waterway



Berm with negative slope



Buffer plus conservation tillage



Plus: Local Action

Landowners interested in alternative practices can explore those options immediately and are encouraged to contact their SWCD. Through statute, local Soil and Water Conservation Districts are empowered to work with Field Office Technical Guide practices or combinations of practices that help landowners find alternatives that best fit their land.

An understanding of a landowner's operations and landscapes, and providing options, is key to the successful use of alternative practices.

