

Harvestable Buffers



Yahara CLEAN Harvestable Buffer Program

A harvestable buffer, or field border, is a strip of grass that can be harvested and utilized while also providing an environmental benefit by capturing sediment, nutrients and pesticides. These buffers can consist of either cool-season (ex. Brome) or native prairie (ex. Big Blue Stem) grass mixes. Through the CLEAN Harvestable Buffer Program, landowners can establish and maintain a buffer with a perennial grass cover for a fifteen year contract period.

What are the benefits of this program?

- ✍ Payment for buffer installation based upon an annual rental rate of **\$450/acre/year**. The total contract payment will be made in one payment to the landowner once the buffer is established.
- ✍ Reduced phosphorus losses from cropland.
- ✍ Forage harvest opportunity.

How can I participate in this program?

This program is available to landowners in the Dane County portion of the Yahara River and the Badfish Creek watersheds as part of a larger effort to reduce phosphorus losses from cropland and improve water quality. Dane County Land and Water Resources Department staff will help participants identify cropped fields that are eligible for the Harvestable Buffer Program and develop cost-share agreements.

**For more information, please
contact:**

Land Conservation Division
(608) 224-3730
landcon@countyofdane.com

Cost-share practice eligibility requirements:

- ✦ Eligible cropland includes:
 - Fields adjacent to perennial or intermittent streams.
 - End rows around cropped fields for access to buffers.
- ✦ A minimum buffer strip width of 30 feet with a maximum width determined based on phosphorus reductions and management needs. If the contracted area includes sixty-six percent or more of the field, the landowner has an option to enroll the whole field.
- ✦ Enrolled land must be inventoried, soils sampled, and phosphorus reduction calculated as part of the Yahara River watershed project.
- ✦ Landowner is responsible for maintaining the grass cover for the contract period.
- ✦ Spreading of manure or other forms of phosphorus will not be allowed on the enrolled acres.

Cost-share agreement process:

1



Staff assist landowners to run SNAP Plus on cropped fields to determine if they are eligible for the Harvestable Buffer Program.

2



Landowner signs a cost share agreement for eligible acres. Cost share agreement is approved by Land Conservation Committee.

3



Landowner seeds identified acres with an approved mix. Staff field verifies seeding establishment.

4



Landowner submits paid in full invoices for seeding establishment.

5



Landowner receives a payment based upon rental rate, acres established, years of contract, and cost of vegetation establishment (seedbed preparation, seed, planting).



Photo credits: Scott Hennelly

Program implementation is contingent on funding availability.