

This area is wet.
Plant some water-loving plants.



Dogwoods and redbuds love the shade.



This is a great place for a blue bird house.



This area should have more plants.
Plant a tree or a few shrubs.
Enjoy the view. Go fishing.
Repeat next Saturday.



Look at the eggs we found!



Plant a holly off to the side. Don't block the view.



This area, cleared for utilities, will work great for a mulched path. Some shrubs will hide the utilities.



Plant a few shrubs along the path. Add some more for wildlife habitat.



For more information

www.visitcaroline.com

Contact your local Property Owners Association for any additional requirements.

Caroline County
Department of Planning & Community Development



Caroline County
Department of Planning and
Community Development
(804)633-4303



This project received funding from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Chesapeake Bay Local Assistance Division via grant agreement number BAY-2007-WQIF-05.

Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act and Caroline County's Bay Act Program Resource Protection Area



Homeowner's Guide to Waterfront Living



Everyone wants to live near the water! Imagine sitting under the canopy of majestic shade trees, or strolling along the meandering path that leads to the water. Your own waterfront property.

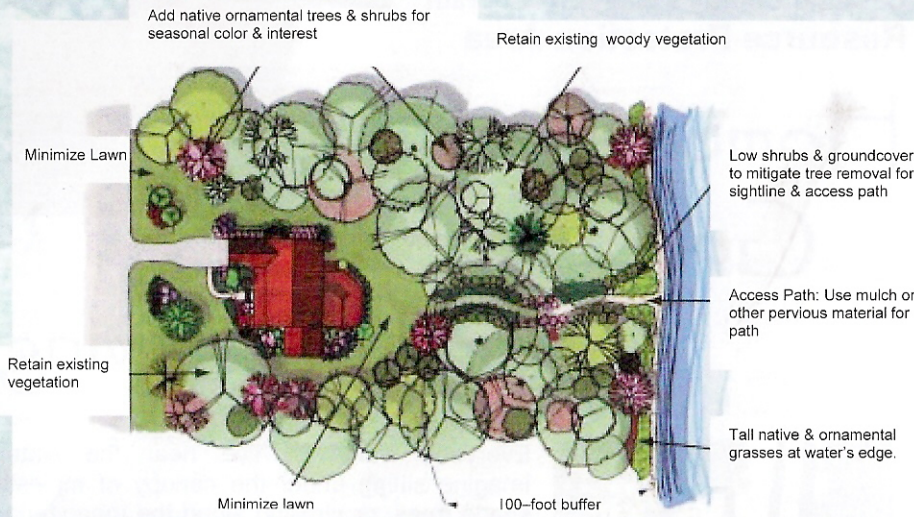
Whether it's a new home or an existing one, it's the water that makes it so special. But, before making your dreams into reality, there are a few things you need to know about the waterfront and the surrounding natural area called the RPA.

So, what is the RPA? Well, by definition it is a Resource Protection Area, RPA. In other words, it is a buffer to protect the water, whether it's a river, stream, pond or lake.

The natural buffer consists of a vegetated area, with trees, shrubs, and other plants. The ground has its natural ground cover, leaf litter or mulch that helps to absorb and filter the runoff from your yard, home and driveway, and allows water to naturally infiltrate into the ground.

The RPA buffer was created as part of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act (1988) [www.dcr.virginia.gov.chesapeake_bay_local_assistance]. The RPA helps to protect and improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

The RPA buffer is 100 feet wide starting at the water's edge (or wetland). In many older subdivisions, the county allowed an encroachment into the buffer for the construction of a home. Since a portion of the vegetation was removed, the homeowner should improve and enhance the function of the remaining buffer area.



What Can I do in the RPA Buffer?

Can I plant grass?

The preferred ground cover is the natural mulch layer along with canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs, and groundcover plants. Lawn grass doesn't do well in this setting. So, keep the buffer in a natural state and let your lawn grass thrive in your yard area.

Can I remove trees in the RPA? *

You should practice good woodlot management. Trees and shrubs may be trimmed to allow for healthy growth. The removal of dead, dying and diseased trees and shrubs, as well as noxious weeds and invasive plants, is permitted, although, you may want to leave some areas in their 'wild' condition for the birds and wildlife.

What does "Clear for View and Vista" mean? *

It allows for limited removal of vegetation to provide a view of the water or other landscape feature. Don't remove the natural mulch or groundcover. And if you have to remove vegetation, leave the roots in the ground and let them re-sprout. Remember, the buffer is a natural area, not a lawn area.

Can I have a path to the water? *

Yes. The path should be covered with a natural material such mulch, woodchips, or small gravel. A meandering path is usually more attractive and is less likely to erode into the water.

* County approval may be required for this activity.

Can I plant flowers, shrubs, and trees?

Of course. Most homeowners want a little more order in the buffer especially when it's adjacent to their backyard. Remember, the best buffers share the traits of a natural forest. Native species are preferred. There are a number of native trees that may be planted, such as birches, maples, dogwoods and redbuds; native shrubs, such as hollies, viburnums, and rhododendrons, and; plants such as ferns and lilies, as well as numerous others. [Check the websites on the back cover for more ideas.]

Can I put a seating area in the buffer?

Yes, it's your property where you can enjoy the view of the water or try out your newest fishing lure. However, clearing and other similar activities are strictly regulated and are generally not permitted within the buffer area. If a natural clearing exists for seating, be sure to add a good mulch cover to prevent erosion and reduce runoff into the water.

I have standing water in my buffer zone. What can I do with it?

A little standing water for short periods of time is not always a bad thing; it is perhaps the best way to provide for natural infiltration. Sometimes, adding mulch or leaves and water-loving plants such as willows or birches, as well as plants like ferns can make a great feature in your yard and help solve the issue. But too much water in the wrong place can be a problem. Contact us for site specific advice.

Oh no! The buffer is already cleared. What now?

My builder had to clear an area through the buffer for utilities. Do I have to restore it?

Generally, yes, but within reason. Start with a good mulch layer, then shrubs. Consider mulching the cleared area and using it as a path to the water rather than clearing another part of the buffer. Then add landscape plants to naturalize the area.

I have a new home with a cleared buffer and didn't know about the Chesapeake Bay Act.

Unfortunately this happens. The buffer will need to be restored. Typically, the most effective buffer is a forested area with a canopy trees, understory trees, shrubs, and a ground cover such as mulch or leaf debris. First, mulch any disturbed areas. Then, contact the planning department to help develop a plan. Let's do it right the first time.

I have an older home that was built before the Chesapeake Bay Act. Do I have to restore my buffer?

The Bay Act regulations say the buffer should be re-established. We work with homeowners on a voluntary basis to restore and improve the buffer area. Restoration can be as simple as letting mother nature regenerate with native plants, adding a mulched bed with plants, or a complete re-creation of a native forest. Contact the planning department for more information.