

TOWN *of* CARY

2019-2020 State Legislative Agenda Legislative Advocacy Position Statement

Topic: Riparian Buffer Protection

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The Town of Cary is committed to good stewardship of our finite natural resources by preserving and protecting the environment. From open space preservation to stormwater best management practices to 100-foot stream buffers, Cary has a long history of taking effective, science-based action within our community to help protect water quality, preserve floodplains and mitigate flooding.

Riparian buffers have been found to be a vital part of The Town of Cary's stormwater management program, including the management of stormwater runoff from new development. Studies show that buffers of at least 100 feet provide a transition from water bodies and environmentally-sensitive areas associated with water bodies to areas which are less fragile and appropriate for more intense uses and development. The ability to require wider riparian buffers provides a greater level of protection of streams and other water bodies.

Buffers prevent water quality degradation by trapping sediment and preventing significant amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus, pesticides and other pollutants from reaching streams. The vegetation in buffers protects water quality by slowing floodwaters, helping maintain stable stream banks and mitigate erosion. Buffers preserve the water-carrying capacity of streams and protect downstream property from nuisance and structural flooding. Buffers also provide valuable wildlife habitat.

In the Cape Fear basin, these efforts also include protection of water quality in Jordan Lake, which provides drinking water for the Town of Cary and several other municipalities. Improved protection of our drinking water source will allow the Town to continue to provide high-quality drinking water to its citizens, as well as Apex, Morrisville, the Wake County portion of Research Triangle Park and the airport, reliably and at a reasonable cost.

Cary supports preserving its ability to continue using 100-foot stream buffers and to implement and enforce its current riparian buffer ordinance, which applies to riparian buffers in both the Neuse River and Jordan Lake-Cape Fear River Basins. Cary's buffer ordinance complies with state and federal law and permit requirements. Cary's buffer ordinance is a science-based approach to effective protection of water quality.