

A Waterfront “Riparian Buffer Zone”

Growth of algae (“greening”) is a threat to the water quality and beauty of the Tellico Reservoir, and it is increasing with each passing year. Algal growth is increased by phosphate, and the major source of phosphate is fertilizer that is applied to, and runs off from, waterfront properties into the lake. As the number of homeowners on the lakefront and in the watershed increases, so does the amount of pollution. To reduce nutrient & pollutant loading of Tellico Reservoir, WATeR encourages lakefront homeowners to establish a “riparian buffer zone” along their waterfront.

A riparian buffer zone is a narrow strip of land that serves as a zone of protection between the water (lake or stream) and the grass lawns, farmland, or roads that border it. An effective riparian zone slows and absorbs rainwater runoff from the land. The plants and bacteria in the riparian zone act to improve water quality by taking up and metabolizing fertilizers and pesticides in rainwater runoff from upland areas, before they enter the lake or stream. Vegetation planted in the riparian zone can also serve as wildlife habitat and an aesthetically pleasing way to reduce shoreline erosion.

What a Homeowner Can Do to Protect Reservoir Water Quality:

- Reduce the use of phosphate-containing fertilizer on the lawn.
- Maintain existing trees along the shoreline to stabilize the soil against erosion, and to shade and cool the shallow area of water next to the shoreline.
- Install a riparian buffer zone of 15 feet between your grass lawn and the waterfront (and above the shoreline row of trees, if any), as seen below.

