

## Help Local Streams: Protect Riparian Zones

Spring showers bring May flowers and often flooding, too. Stream bank flooding is a natural process that slows the flow of a stream, allows sediment, organic matter, and nutrients to be deposited, and promotes groundwater recharge. In natural stream systems, streams are able to flood over their banks into an area called the riparian zone. Healthy riparian zones are wide (25 to 300 feet) and have native plants, shrubs, and trees that help absorb water, nutrients and hold soil and debris in place. These natural controls help to maintain good water quality and habitats.

Urbanization and poor development practices have reduced the ability of streams to handle large rain events, resulting in more problematic flooding. These practices included increasing hard surfaces such as sidewalks, driveways and roads, building within the floodplain, removal of vegetation, and channeling of streams. Reducing these practices will help protect streams and lessen severe flooding.

One way that residents can help reduce the negative impacts of flooding is to support practices and policies that protect riparian areas. This includes landowners planting native plants, shrubs, and trees along stream corridors. Studies have shown that vegetated riparian zones can raise property values. If you are unable to plant along the stream, avoid mowing right up to the edge of the stream. Residents can also protect streams and reduce flooding issues by supporting riparian setback ordinances within their community.

To find out more about the benefits of vegetated riparian areas and how to help protect them, visit <http://www.epa.gov/glnpo/aoc/cuyahoga/pdfs/Riparianbrochure.pdf>.

For more information on the Tinker's Creek watershed visit: [www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org](http://www.tinkerscreekwatershed.org) or contact Babette at [babette@tinkerscreekwatershed.org](mailto:babette@tinkerscreekwatershed.org).