

# Buffer Buzz

No. 1

A Source of Information for Trees Forever Buffer Program Participants

January 2009

## Flood survey shows buffer successes

**T**rees Forever buffer program participants say their conservation buffers worked as they expected during the 2008 weather disasters, according to a survey completed last fall. A full 96% of the survey respondents reported that their buffers were effective in controlling soil erosion, thus protecting water quality.

Surveys were mailed to approximately 350 Trees Forever buffer program participants in Iowa and Illinois. Eighty-three landowners, or nearly 24 percent of those surveyed, responded to the questionnaire.

The types of buffers covered in the survey included riparian buffers (streams, wetlands, and ponds), grass filter strips and waterways, and some windbreak installations.

Some results from survey respondents:

- 73 percent reported no soil erosion from their buffer site.
- 70 percent reported no soil was washed onto their buffer sites.

- 37 percent reported stream bank degradation.

Of the landowners who reported damage to their buffer sites, many had buffers that were newly established or had trees standing in water for an extended period of time. Some buffers were located in areas of extreme flooding, where some of the damage reported resulted from collisions with debris floating down the stream. Likewise, tree loss or damage and soil erosion were more prevalent in newly planted buffer installations.

Sixteen respondents reported



Lyle DeGraw of Rockford, Iowa, stands with his granddaughter in front of a flooded road and field as the Winnebago River leaves its banks. Lyle's buffer (smaller trees in front) came through the flooding in good shape.

losses on their buffers with an average estimated dollar value of \$1,626 per site. Of those indicating a need, the average estimated cost of repair or replacement (including labor) was \$2,875 per site.

Many landowners commented that they felt the damage and soil loss they experienced would have been much worse if the buffers were not there. As one buffer site owner commented, his buffer "worked really well. We didn't lose much. It looked a lot better than the neighbor's," a frequent comment from survey respondents.

We would like to thank everyone who returned surveys. To receive a copy of the Buffer Survey Report, please call 1-800-369-1269, ext. 10, or log on to [www.treesforever.org](http://www.treesforever.org).

### Replacement funds for Illinois buffer participants

Trees Forever's *Illinois Buffer Partnership* participants whose buffers sustained damage from the weather disasters of 2008 can re-apply for an Illinois Buffer Partnership grant. We are still taking applications for 2009.

To find the application, go to Trees Forever's website at: [www.treesforever.org](http://www.treesforever.org) or call 800-369-1269 x10.

## Carbon Credits, another source of income for landowners

**Y**ou may have heard of a “Carbon Credit” program available to give farmers another resource to tap into for added income. What are carbon credits and can they benefit me as a buffer owner?

First we need to define a couple of terms:

**Carbon Sequestration** – the capture and secure storage of carbon that would otherwise be released to or remain in the atmosphere.

**Carbon credits** – These are values given to practices which prevent/reduce carbon emissions or securely store carbon (sequester it).

Who wants to buy carbon credits and what are they worth? The Chicago Climate Exchange (CCX) was started a few years ago to broker the acquisition and selling of carbon credits, or offsets. Several entities (e.g., electric power generators, manufacturing companies and state and local governments) have voluntarily joined the exchange and have set goals for reducing their

carbon output (greenhouse gases). If an entity does not meet its goal of reducing greenhouse gases, it then purchases credits or offsets to make up the difference. The value of a metric ton of carbon in 2006 ranged from around \$1.00 to near \$5.00.

So what can a landowner do to benefit from this market? The primary way landowners benefit from the Climate Exchange is by selling carbon credits into the market. There are several ways that landowners can accumulate these credits which are determined by various land use practices. Some of the more common are continuous no-till or strip till plantings, newly established grass plantings, and newly established tree plantings. All of these activities sequester carbon, either in the soil as humus and organic matter (no-till and grass plantings) or in the plant and soil (tree plantings).

Different rates of sequestration are calculated for each of these practices. The landowner needs to verify and

contract for each to be able to sell them on the exchange. This is where the aggregators come in. Aggregators are people or organizations who work with landowners to verify their practices, determine the amount of carbon being sequestered and add it with other landowners’ values (aggregating or pooling) and sell it on the exchange.

This is a very simplified discussion of Carbon Credits, but this is another way landowners might profit from the positive practices they are implementing on their land.

AgraGate is a national leading supplier of carbon credit aggregation services to agriculture. If you are interested in learning more about Carbon Credits and whether you are eligible for the program, go to the AgraGate web site at: [www.agragate.com](http://www.agragate.com). There is a good video there that explains carbon credits. You may also contact Dave Krog at 515-226-6276 or [dkrog@agragate.com](mailto:dkrog@agragate.com). His address is: 5400 University Ave, West Des Moines, IA 50266.

### Welcome to the inaugural edition of *Buffer Buzz*!

We hope you will find this newsletter helpful as we bring you timely information about issues that you as landowners and buffer program participants need for successful projects. We also want to hear your ideas or suggestions you have about issues you would like to see included in *Buffer Buzz*.

Help save mailing costs. To receive an electronic version of *Buffer Buzz* e-mail Ashley Green at: [agreen@treesforever.org](mailto:agreen@treesforever.org). To contact *Buffer Buzz* e-mail or call Barb Grabner-Kerns at address below.



**Iowa Buffer Program Contact:**  
*Working Watersheds: Buffers and Beyond*  
 Barb Grabner-Kerns  
 515-576-3436  
[bgrabner-kerns@treesforever.org](mailto:bgrabner-kerns@treesforever.org)

**Illinois Buffer Program Contact:**  
*Illinois Buffer Partnership*  
 Debbie Fluegel  
 309-925-9925  
[dfluegel@treesforever.org](mailto:dfluegel@treesforever.org)

Trees Forever • 770 7th Avenue • Marion, IA 52302 • 800-369-1269 • [www.treesforever.org](http://www.treesforever.org)

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