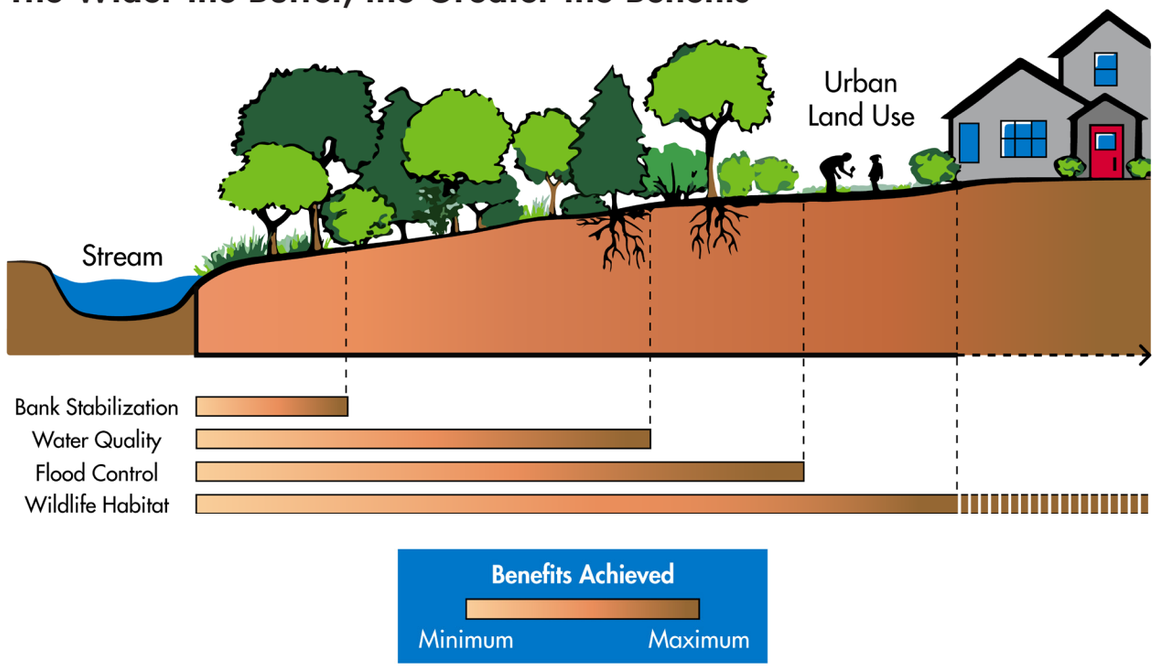
# REQUIREMENTS AND LOCATION

LCRA's Highland Lakes Watershed Ordinance requires buffer zones for any new development to help protect water quality from the impact of development activities.

Look for the location of the buffer zone or "Waterway Buffer Zone Easement" on your property on your lot survey and/or in the subdivision plat notes and restrictive covenants. LCRA, your builder or subdivision developer also can provide this information.

## The Wider the Buffer, the Greater the Benefits




*Relationship between riparian buffer width and its functions (adapted from Hawes and Smith, 2005). Distance of benefits varies due to site conditions such as slope.*

# MAINTAIN YOUR BUFFER ZONE

Property owners are responsible for establishing and maintaining a property's buffer zone easement. Any proposed changes require LCRA approval.

## Not allowed in a buffer zone easement:

- Structures, land grading or permanent improvements, except for low-impact backyard improvements, such as walking trails, picnic facilities and other similar construction that does not significantly alter existing vegetation or drainage patterns.
- Paths constructed of imported materials. Wood mulch may be used, but only in areas where it will not be washed away by high water.
- Septic systems and wastewater irrigation.
- Use of fertilizers, herbicides or pesticides.

## Maintain your buffer zone easement by:

- Removing only invasive species and pruning vegetation only for maintenance. Avoid excessive pruning and trimming to promote natural propagation.
- Removing trees and vegetation by hand only; do not use vehicles or construction equipment to avoid disturbing the soil.
- Enhancing with native plants if the easement was previously disturbed or contains invasive vegetation. Select native shrubs and deep-rooted native grasses to help stabilize the soil and establish good drought tolerance.
- Planting native vegetation in clumps, blocks or strips as a border at the upper part of the buffer zone. This provides a physical border between lawns, play areas and the buffer zone, adds aesthetic value and enhances stormwater runoff filtration.

If planning any type of roadway or creek crossing, contact LCRA at 512-578-2324 or HLWO@lcra.org for specific guidelines.

## LEARN MORE:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| LCRA Highland Lakes Watershed Ordinance<br>*www.lcra.org* | Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center<br>*www.wildflower.org* | City of Austin Grow Green Program<br>*www.growgreen.org* | Texas Riparian Association<br>*http://texasriparian.org* |

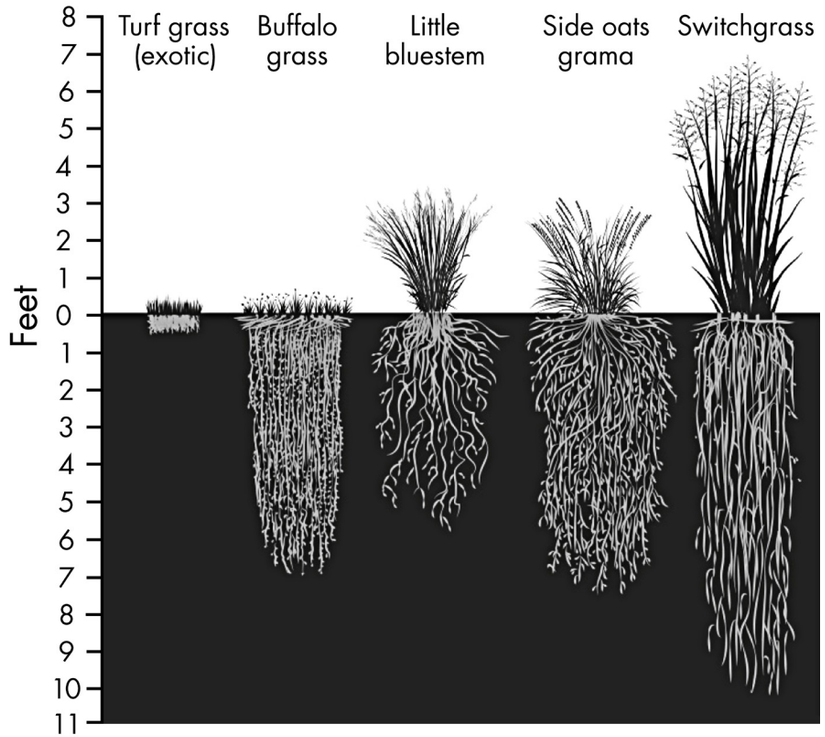
# WHAT IS A BUFFER ZONE?

A buffer zone is the area of natural vegetation, which can include grass, shrubs and trees, adjacent to a river, creek or natural drainage way that separates the waterway from developed areas such as lawns, buildings, roads and driveways.

Without buffer zones, runoff from nearby homes and neighborhoods can accumulate sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, metals, pet waste, oil and other vehicle fluids that pollute nearby waterways.

## Buffer zones benefit waterways by:

- Removing sediments, nutrients, metals and other toxic pollutants.
- Reducing the rate of runoff flow and allowing the water to filter down to and recharge aquifers and springs.
- Stabilizing the soil, which reduces channel erosion and property loss.
- Mitigating flooding by providing areas for streams to overflow and reducing small drainage issues.
- Providing aquatic and wildlife habitat.
- Preserving and allowing for restoration of natural character.
- Protecting adjacent properties and serving as space for greenways.




*Native grasses have greater holding capacity compared to turf grasses. (Tennessee Urban Riparian Buffer Handbook)*

# PROPERTY OWNER'S GUIDE TO BUFFER ZONES

LCRA
ENERGY • WATER • COMMUNITY SERVICES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