

Act 110 – River Corridor & Buffer Protection

With the Passage of Act 110, Vermont has taken another important step toward protecting river corridors and riparian buffers and creating an environmentally and economically sustainable relationship with its rivers and streams.

The Rivers Program would like to bring this to your attention because several important parts of Act 110 took effect on July 1st. Links are provided below to two documents, Act 110 in its entirety and a separate document summarizing the river corridor and stream riparian buffer provisions. The latter is intended to highlight important new state policy and river corridor management initiatives the Rivers Program will be working on in the coming months.

Without research of every river-related statute in the country it is hard to characterize the uniqueness of this legislative action, but there is little doubt that Vermont is one of the first States to recognize the importance of protecting river corridor lands that:

1. accommodate the dimension, pattern, profile, and buffer of the naturally stable channel; and that
2. are necessary to maintain and restore the fluvial equilibrium conditions and minimize fluvial erosion hazards.

Consideration of the full range of public benefits derived from natural river processes and geomorphology is now part of the legislatively adopted public policy of the State. Act 110 calls on for the establishment of a River Corridor Management Program to produce:

1. River Corridor Protection Procedures to include a priority schedule for providing river corridor and buffer maps
2. Best Management Practices for river corridors and buffers
3. Municipal Incentives (for the adoption of river corridor and buffer protection bylaws) and Minimum Standards for Municipal Eligibility

Act 110 also calls for a set of corollary actions with respect to lake shoreland protection, and the Rivers Program will work collaboratively with the Lakes and Pond Section's Shoreland Management Program to develop a holistic set of procedures, practices, and incentives.

The Rivers Program participated in crafting portions of Act 110. Many people within the Legislature, ANR, and other organizations worked on the Bill and guided the legislation through the process. Those who are interested in learning more about this work and discussing opportunities to move this new state policy forward may contact the DEC River Management Program.

Mike Kline, Rivers Program Manager
Department of Environmental Conservation
Waterbury, VT 05671
(802) 241-3774
mike.kline@state.vt.us

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