

Riparian Buffers Working Group - October 10, 2025 – Summary for Buffers Briefing

Good news! The first meeting of the Riparian Buffers Working Group seemed to find consensus on some issues. Below is a summary of the key points of discussion and areas where there was general agreement.

Scope and Focus

- The group agreed that its work will focus on watercourses. Wetlands are outside the scope of this discussion.
- There was consensus that a one-size-fits-all approach for buffer widths is not appropriate. Any recommendations should allow flexibility to reflect site conditions while maintaining strong protection goals.
- Recommendations should aim to ensure clear and unambiguous implementation by local land use commissions.
- The intent is to preserve existing non-invasive vegetation along watercourses — not to require restoration on previously developed sites. Restoration can be encouraged through incentives and voluntary programs, rather than new mandates.

Guiding Considerations

Recommendations developed by the group should be evaluated through several lenses (this is not a complete list, just what seemed to rise to the top):

- Impact on agriculture and working lands
- Impact on working waterfront activities – i.e. marinas. Maine has a good definition for this.
- Can recommendations enjoy uniform application?
- Effect on direct waterfront access
- Balance with property rights

Things that need to be emphasized in order to move forward

- The initial version of HB 7174 is not the starting point for this process.
- Ensure that the core purpose remains clear: to protect the non-invasive vegetation along Connecticut's watercourses so that it can continue to reduce stormwater runoff impacts and improve overall water quality in a way that does not conflict with property rights and clearly gives our local commissions the tools they need to protect these vegetative strips.