



Energy and Environment Cabinet

Department for Environmental Protection

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Division of Water

We All Live DOWNSTREAM

This means that the usability of the water available to us is determined by our upstream neighbors. Certain activities in and around streams require permits, especially if there is an impact to a wetland, floodplain, or the water quality of a given area. *However, if you follow some simple guidelines and best practices, you may work in streams without obtaining a permit from the Kentucky Division of Water or the US Army Corps of Engineers.*

The following guide is designed to walk you through the when, where, and how of working in Kentucky waterways, so that property owners can prevent property damage from erosion, reduce flooding, and maintain a healthy stream.

Helpful Links

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

401 Certification Application: For construction across or along a stream and/or Water Quality Certification

Water Health Portal: Use this tool to find out more about the health of your stream, and determine if there are any water quality impairments on the waterway.

Special Use Waters App: Log into this web application from your phone or desktop and find out what waterway you are near, and determine if it has any special protection status that would require you to obtain a permit before beginning construction.

Stream Management Guidelines

STREAM MAINTENANCE

Guide to removal of debris from KY waterways

Log jams, fallen trees, sediment (silt/sand and/or gravel), debris and other materials can build up and obstruct flow in ditches, streams, culverts, and under bridges during and after periods of heavy rainfall.

Though these types of obstructions are natural and part of a healthy creek system, some obstructions may create an increased risk of flooding, property and infrastructure damage, and result in erosion or increased sedimentation. In these cases we can remove the blockage using Best Management Practice guidelines that restore flow, but do not damage the creek, or make flooding issues worse.

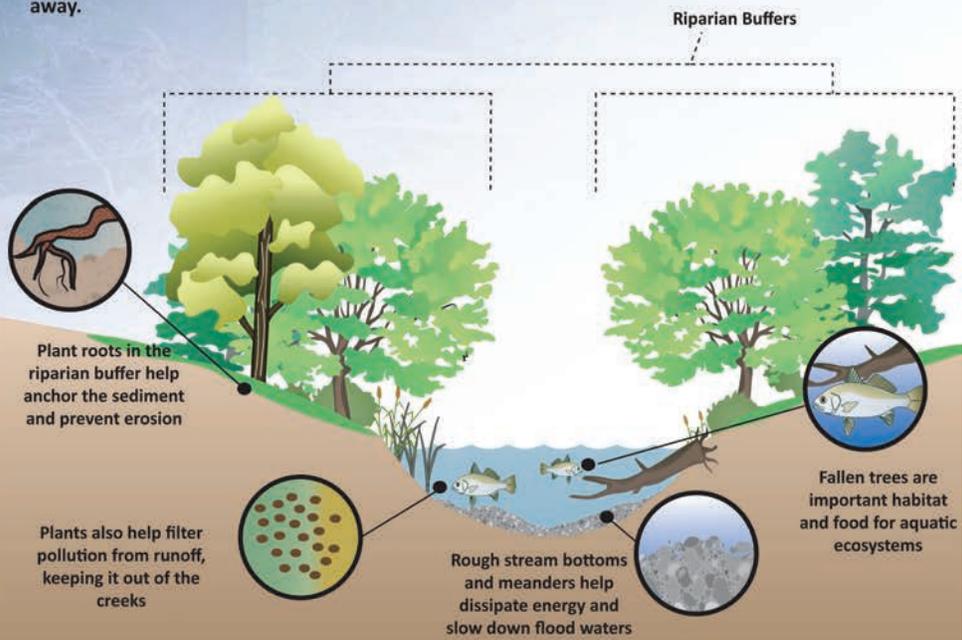
This guide is designed to inform property owners of what they can do in the creek to remove obstructions safely and efficiently, and what activities require a permit.

Healthy Creeks = Healthy Communities

Why Care About Healthy Streams?

A healthy stream ecosystem is the best defense against flooding and erosion problems on your property. When we straighten, armor, and remove vegetation from streams, we increase the amount of water entering the creek and the speed at which it travels, commonly resulting in damaging high waters and accelerating land loss due to erosion.

By protecting the plant communities near streams through wise stream management practices, we can ensure good water quality, reduce flooding likelihood, and keep our property from washing away.



Guidelines for Stream Obstruction Removal

Follow These Guidelines and No Permits Are Required

- Gravel mined and used on your property does not require a permit.
- Reseed and mulch your work area once your project is complete to prevent sediment from washing into the stream
- Store fuel, debris, and mined gravel in an upland site, outside the floodplain.
- Do not use the stream as a road. Access the creek from the bank.
- Removing gravel should be done from the bank or a nearby bridge.
- Only excavate the top of the gravel bar, 12" above the water's surface.
- Log jam debris and other obstructions removed from the stream should be stored outside the floodplain.
- Minimize disturbance of the Riparian Zone to prevent erosion and habitat loss.
- Use sediment control measures like silt fences to prevent soils from entering the creek.
- Gravel excavation should be conducted only during low-flow, preferably in late summer or fall.
- Avoid working in the stream during fish spawning season (April 15- June 15).

MORE TIPS

Try to limit gravel removal to one excavation per year.

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What happens upstream affects those living downstream! Good Stewardship Practices in the creek are one way we help protect not only our own land, but our neighbors as well.

You Need a Permit When...

- You can't work from the bank and have to enter the stream with equipment.
- Planning to work in a protected stream, such as Outstanding State Resource Waters.
- Excavating gravel for commercial sale.
- Installing bank stabilization structures.
- Building culverts, bridges and low water crossings in the stream.
- Still not sure if you need a permit? Contact KDOW to find out!

For More Information Contact

Kentucky Division of Water
 300 Sower Blvd.
 Frankfort, KY 40601
 Email: water@ky.gov
 Phone: 502-564-3410
 Website: water.ky.gov/waterquality

