

Throughout the course of my independent study, I developed an understanding about the significance of riparian buffers in ensuring water quality, promoting wildlife habitat, and preventing erosion. I also learned how to use CT ECO maps, read the Tennessee riparian buffer guide, and discovered what to consider when developing a planting plan.

One of the main things I learned was how to use CT ECO maps to identify the location, extent, and characteristics of riparian buffers in my area. This online tool allowed me to zoom in on specific areas of interest and view a variety of data layers, such as land cover, wetlands, and water resources. By overlaying these layers and using the legend to interpret the colors and symbols, I was able to identify potential riparian buffers and assess their condition.

I spent a lot of the semester reading and rereading the Tennessee riparian buffer guide, which provided a comprehensive overview of the benefits of riparian buffers, the types of vegetation that are most suitable for different locations, and the best management practices for establishing and maintaining buffers. This guide helped me understand the complex interactions between land use, water quality, and ecological systems, and gave me a framework for designing effective buffer systems.

Finally, I used the riparian buffer planting guide to select appropriate plants for my specific location. This guide provided information on the key characteristics that would qualify it to be beneficial for a buffer, and it was convenient to have a list of species in one place so I could examine each one and decide which would be most beneficial. For more information, I would google the latin name for the plant, and used a variety of sources to determine bloom timing, spacing, and final growth height. By following the recommendations in this guide, I

was able to create a detailed planting plan that took into account the unique characteristics of my site and the specific goals I had for my buffer.

Overall, my independent study on riparian buffers was an excellent opportunity to gain practical skills in reading GIS maps, and understand what goes into field work. By learning how to use CT ECO maps, reading the Tennessee riparian buffer guide, and planning for different seasons using the riparian buffer planting guide, I gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of riparian buffers in protecting our natural resources and the many benefits they provide to society.

