Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan – June 2006

Recommended wetland buffer widths and maintenance

Master Plan Section References: 4.2.2, 4.3, and 5.2.2

The Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel adopted this document at its January 8, 2022 meeting.

The purpose of this document is to assist applicants with development projects in the Big Darby Accord area in understanding the expectations of the Big Darby Accord Advisory Panel as to the treatment of wetlands on development sites. This document summarizes the wetland buffer recommendations contained in the Big Darby Accord Watershed Master Plan (BDAWMP).

The Watershed Master Plan references the Rainwater and Land Development manual published by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in its discussions on wetlands. Since the Master Plan's adoption, the Rainwater and Land Development manual is now provided by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency. The Master Plan recommends that for wetlands to be preserved on a development site that buffer areas be developed in accordance with the criteria contained in the Rainwater and Land Development manual (BDAWMP Section 5.2.2). It is noted that the Master Plan uses the term buffer while the Rainwater and Land Development manual uses setback; for purposes of this document the term setback refers to a buffer. Additionally, in the case of any conflict between the Master Plan, the Ohio EPA Darby General Construction Permit, or the Rainwater and Land Development manual, the more stringent standard should apply. The Master Plan also recommends that adequate hydrology be maintained to preserved wetlands under the post-construction condition; however existing wetlands cannot be used as part of the stormwater management plan (BDAWMP Section 4.2.2). Finally, the Master Plan recommends that preserved wetlands be located within open space, protected by easement, and be properly maintained (BDAWMP Section 4.3 and 5.2.2).

Rainwater and Land Development Wetland Setback Design Criteria

Define the Wetland Boundary

Wetland boundaries are determined by utilizing the delineation protocols acceptable to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the time. Delineations must be submitted to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for concurrence and verification. Wetland setbacks should be measured in a perpendicular direction from the defined wetland boundary.

Evaluate Wetland Quality Category

Ohio EPA wetland categories are used to determine the width of the wetland setback. These are general characterizations of a wetland's quality and are determined using the most recent version of the Ohio Rapid Assessment Method as guidance. Ohio EPA wetland categories are defined in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) 3745-1-54.

Setback Width

Recommended buffer widths:

- Category 3 - minimum of 120 feet
- Category 2 - minimum of 75 feet
- Category 1 - minimum of 25 feet

The Rainwater and Land Development manual states that these setback widths offer minimum protection and should be considered for expansion if any of the following conditions apply:

- Areas crucial to the hydrology of the wetland such as springs, floodplains or streams extend beyond the standard wetland setback. These areas should be considered for incorporation in the setback area, since maintaining the hydrologic support for the wetland is critical to its continuing function.
- The wetland is a rare, sensitive or high value wetland system. These systems need greater buffer widths to ensure protection of the current quality.
- Habitat protection, either of wetland species or species that utilize the wetland, is a major objective. Greater than 100 feet is recommended, but wildlife expertise may be necessary to determine the conditions and width needed for the particular species.
- Larger setbacks may be appropriate for drainage from a commercial or industrial facility that may require pretreatment and flow attenuation.
- Areas that are steep or sparsely vegetated will have lower effectiveness in providing water quality protection for adjacent wetlands and therefore should be expanded.

Planting and Maintenance

The Wetland Setback should be preserved in a natural state and established prior to any soil-disturbing activities. This area should not be mowed or disturbed in any way. If planting occurs within the setback, only native species should be utilized.

Wetland Setbacks should be inspected regularly to ensure that the Wetland Setbacks are being maintained in a natural state and have not been mowed, treated with herbicide (except as used to control invasive species), or developed. Wetland Setbacks and the wetlands they surround should be placed in a conservation easement to protect these resources in perpetuity. Easements should be regularly monitored and violations of easement agreements addressed in order to ensure long-term protection.