

## RPAs protect water quality by:

- Slowing down and absorbing runoff;
- Reducing and preventing erosion;
- Providing shade for the stream and reducing water temperature;
- Taking up nitrogen and phosphorous, which are major pollutants in the Chesapeake Bay;
- Breaking down chemicals like pesticides and insecticides into less toxic forms.

## How can I take better care of the RPA on my property?

### *In the Garden*

- Remove invasive plants from the RPA.
- Plant native trees and shrubs in the RPA.
- Recycle grass clippings and leaves as natural fertilizer for your grass.
- Minimize or stop using fertilizer and pesticides. Even low levels can damage aquatic life.

### *Around Your Home*

- Direct your downspouts into your yard.
- Create a rain garden—a vegetated area designed to collect and filter runoff.
- Install a rain barrel or cistern, to collect rain water from your roof to use for irrigation.
- Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveways and sidewalks.

Never dump anything down a storm drain! Storm drains flow directly into our local streams. Drop off household hazardous materials at the County's Hazmat Facility (703-228-6832).

## What is a Resource Protection Area (RPA)?

A Resource Protection Area (RPA) is the area of land next to a stream. RPAs are generally 100 feet wide, but may be wider in areas with steep slopes.

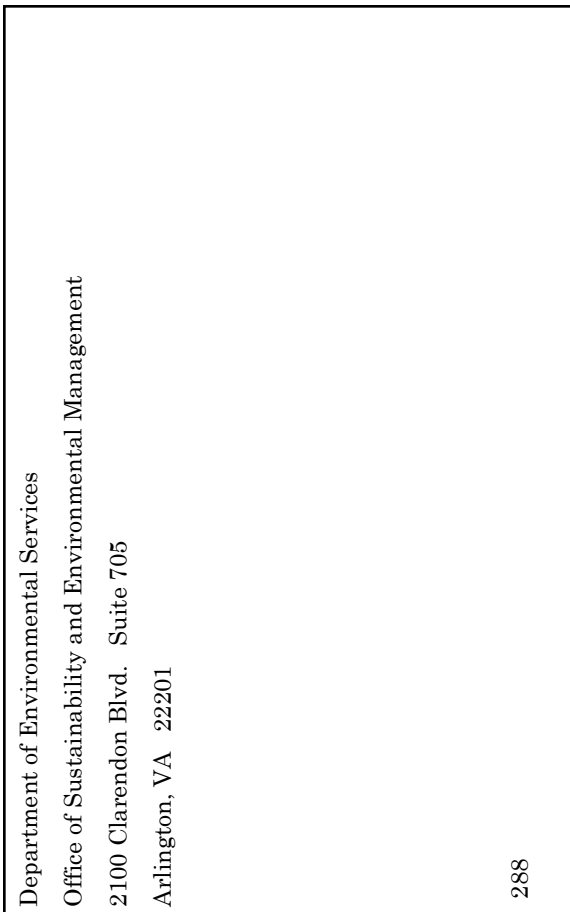
RPAs are stream buffers, and help protect water quality in local streams and the Chesapeake Bay. RPAs filter out pollutants from stormwater runoff, reduce the volume of stormwater runoff, prevent erosion and provide habitat. In RPAs, existing trees and other vegetation are protected and building projects are regulated to protect water quality.

**How do I know if there is RPA on my property?** RPAs include any area within 100 feet of a stream. View a map of the RPAs in Arlington: <https://building.arlingtonva.us/codes-ordinances/chesapeake-bay/>

You can also call Arlington County Department of Environmental Services about RPAs (703-228-4488).

**What happens if RPAs are not properly managed?** State law requires that RPAs be protected. Because RPAs are so close to water bodies, disturbing them allows more pollutants to enter streams and, eventually, the Chesapeake Bay. Stream buffers protect water quality, and also provide wildlife habitat and beautiful parks to enjoy.

# ARLINGTON VIRGINIA



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288

## Living Near a Stream: Understanding Resource Protection Areas



## What types of things can I do in an RPA?

As a homeowner living in or near an RPA, you can help protect local streams and the Chesapeake Bay by preserving this valuable stream buffer. The presence of natural areas and mature trees also increases your property value.

The ideal condition for the Resource Protection Area is forest. Before doing any landscaping or tree removal (even if the tree is dead) in the RPA, please contact DES to discuss your project.

### **Home Repair, Gardening & Maintenance**

Repairs, gardening and maintenance work are allowed within the RPA without review and approval, unless the work includes:

- The creation of new paved surfaces or buildings within the RPA,
- The disturbance of more than 2,500 square feet of land, or
- The removal of any vegetation other than lawn.

### **Trimming Vegetation for Sight Lines**

Before doing any trimming and clearing of vegetation or trees, please contact DES for approval at 703-228-4488. Any tree removed from the RPA will need to be replaced. If you would like to remove a tree, you will need to submit an assessment of the tree from an MAC-ISA certified arborist (<https://goodtreecare.com/>).

## What Activities in the RPA Require Approval?

Except for the minor activities described in the previous section, most activities in the RPA require some level of County review and approval. In general, development is allowed in an RPA as long as the overall developed area does not increase or extend further into the RPA.

### **Replacing a Structure**

Activities such as replacing an existing deck in the RPA or installing a new fence in the RPA, although considered allowable, must be approved by the County.



### **New Structures**

Creating a new structure or paved area in the RPA, such as building a retaining wall, an addition to your home, or a new home, generally will require an exception request. In all cases, the County will review the proposed RPA activity to protect water quality.

### **Tree Removal**

Pruning or removal of any trees in the RPA requires County review and approval. If you would like to remove a tree, you will need to submit an assessment of the tree from an MAC-ISA certified arborist. Any tree removed from the RPA will need to be replaced.

***To find out more about how to apply for approval for your project, please contact the Department of Environmental Services at [rporeview@arlingtonva.us](mailto:rporeview@arlingtonva.us) or 703-228-4488.***

## How Will My Project Be Reviewed?

You will be asked to fill out a simple form with some basic project information. You can submit this form with your permit application if your project requires a County permit, or separately, if it does not.

Information requested includes the location of your project, the location of the RPA on your property, if any trees will be removed, proposed erosion control measures such as silt fence, and proposed plantings (if any). In some cases, you may be required to compensate for water quality impacts likely to result from your project.



**Ready to apply?** Find the forms on the web at

<https://building.arlingtonva.us/codes-ordinances/chesapeake-bay/>

Scroll down to the **Water Quality Impact Assessment forms**

## Resources

### **Environmental Services**

703-228-4488, or  
<https://environment.arlingtonva.us/>

### **EcoAction Arlington**

703-228-6427  
[www.ecoactionarlington.org](http://www.ecoactionarlington.org)

### **Virginia DCR Riparian Plant List**

[www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural\\_heritage/documents/natvripa.pdf](http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/documents/natvripa.pdf)

### **Plant Nova Natives**

<https://www.plantnovanatives.org/>

### **MAC-ISA certified arborist**

<https://goodtreecare.com/>

### **Northern Virginia Conservation Trust**

– Learn about potential tax benefits of conservation easements  
[www.nvct.org](http://www.nvct.org)

### **Master Gardeners**

[www.mgnv.org](http://www.mgnv.org)

### **Tree Stewards**

[www.treestewards.org/](http://www.treestewards.org/)