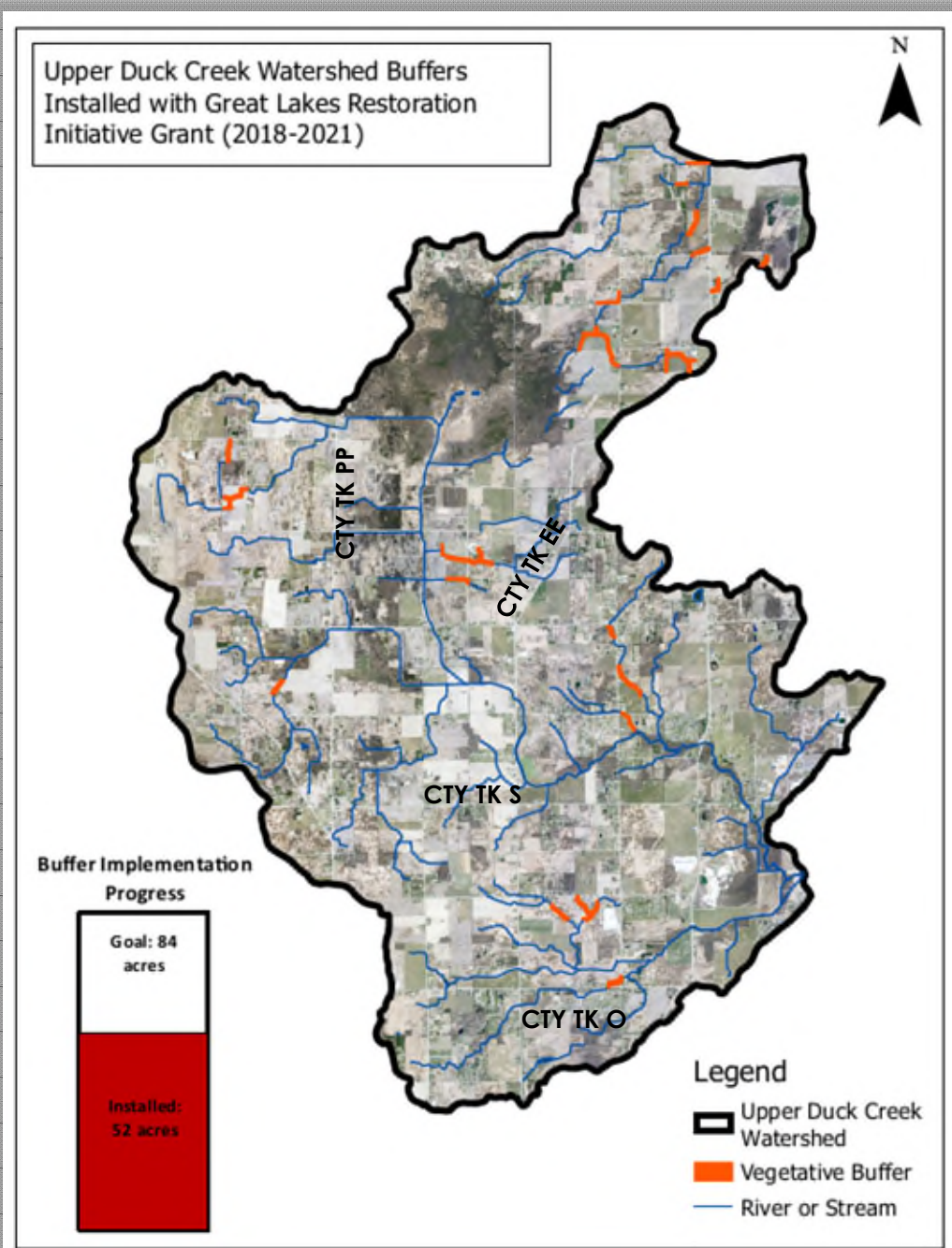


# Vegetative Buffers



Every two years, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources publishes a list of impaired waters, as required by the federal Clean Water Act. Impaired waters are those that fail to meet water quality standards and may not support swimming, fishing, recreation or public health and welfare. The Upper Duck Creek subwatershed is listed as impaired on Wisconsin's listing of impaired and threatened due to excessive phosphorus and sediment loading. The Upper Duck Creek subwatershed covers portions of the towns of Center, Black Creek, Osborn and Freedom.

Outagamie Land Conservation Department (LCD) is implementing a cleanup plan for this watershed. A key part of the clean-up strategy is installing 35-foot wide vegetative buffers within the Upper Duck Creek subwatershed. The goal of this program is to install 84 acres, or approximately 20 miles, of high-quality, harvestable buffers to reduce 151 tons of sediment and 1,008 pounds of phosphorus from entering Duck Creek. Since the program began in 2018, LCD staff worked with landowners to install 52 acres of buffers in the Upper Duck Creek subwatershed which reduced 496 tons of sediment and 758 pounds of phosphorus from entering Duck Creek.

Buffers are installed adjacent to perennial streams in typically the lowest, wettest, and least productive areas of farm fields. By installing a high-quality vegetative buffer, farmers can harvest forage in an area that would otherwise be unprofitable to plant a row crop. These buffers reduce the amount of topsoil washing into and blocking drainage ditches, while also providing habitat and travel corridors for wildlife. LCD staff is looking to continue working with landowners to install buffers on properties in Upper Duck Creek. Through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Grant Program, landowners are compensated \$4,375 per acre upon enrolling in a 15-year cost-share agreement.

Planting harvestable buffers is easy! Buffer mixes can be tailored to each area, and typically consist of grasses and legumes that are already common in agriculture. There is also an opportunity through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - Natural Resource Damage Assessment program to plant a pollinator specific mix to attract beneficial pollinators. Field preparation can occur as normal, or buffers can be no-till planted. If a landowner or farmer does not have appropriate planting equipment, Outagamie County LCD has planters available for use and can assist in planting.

For more information, contact Outagamie County Agronomist/Conservation Planner, Alex Krepline at (920) 570-1462. - Alex



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