

Summary of Beaufort, South Carolina Buffer Areas

Beaufort, South Carolina

To protect water quality and habitat, “a buffer strip of 50 feet from the OCRM critical line was established in 1995 on all waterfront property. The buffer strip must be maintained as an undeveloped landscape or undisturbed natural area with some restricted uses allowed in the area. The River Protection District also establishes development setbacks of 50, 100, and 150 feet from the OCRM critical line, depending on the intended development,” (NPSN 4/5 1998, p. 11).

Beaufort’s Buffer Regulations:

“[A] buffer strip of existing or planted vegetation is established within the District, extending fifty feet perpendicular to and in a horizontal plane from the OCRM Critical Line. The purpose of this buffer strip is to:

1. provide a natural filtration system for runoff from adjoining development that may enter the waters;
2. minimize erosion and help stabilize the streambank;
3. provide a natural habitat for the flora and fauna that exist in this important transition area between wetland and upland areas... The entire buffer must be maintained as an undeveloped landscaped area.”

“No development is permitted in the buffer with the exception of the following six uses:

1. Pedestrian and/or vehicular access ways leading to docks, fishing piers, boat landings... provided that only permeable... or semi-permeable materials ... are used for vehicular access ways...
2. [the structures that the vehicular access ways lead up to]
3. Use of grassed swales rather than drainage pipes is required...
4. Approved flood control and erosion control devices...
5. Utility lines serving approved water/marsh uses or crossing the water/marsh...
6. Installation of playground equipment or benches, picnic tables or other similar outdoor furniture.”

“Roads leading to bridges that cross the waterway [are allowed] provided the roads are placed approximately perpendicular to the line of the buffer and provided all shoulders are grassed.”

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“The following uses within the River Protection Overlay District shall be set back a minimum of fifty feet from the OCRM Critical Line: agricultural uses... regulation golf courses... recreational parks and playgrounds...drainage systems and retention ponds.”

“The following require a one hundred-foot setback:

detached single family residential units, multifamily and attached residential units, parking areas and driveways, garages, [civic buildings] not larger than four thousand square feet, parking lots with no more than [6 spaces or 1000 square feet], ... and ROW of two-lane road.”

Any uses not specified in the River Protection District must be set back a minimum of one hundred fifty feet (Beaufort County River Protection Overlay District Ordinance, pp. 3-6).