



## SMZ ABCs

Professionals love to create impressive terms from their alphabet soups. My favorite is “SMZs”. Not because I get to use the letter “Z”. But, because it is at the heart of caring for one of our state’s most prized possessions – clear, clean water.

SMZ stands for “Streamside Management Zone”. And whether you are a farmer, rancher, or woodland owner, SMZs are critical in maintaining this legacy for our children.

Streamside management zones not only maintain stream banks, but they trap sediment and excess nutrients from our fields and forests. They also provide shade for the stream, moderating water temperature so our fish populations thrive.

But, SMZs need special care and some restrictions during various forest management activities are needed so water quality is maintained or improved.

Streamside zones are separated into two parts: a primary filter strip and a secondary filter strip. The primary strip is 25 feet wide, measured from the top of the stream bank, extending away from both sides of the stream. The secondary strip is variable, depending upon the slope of the ground. Simply determine the percent slope of the ground and multiply by 2. For example, if you determine the slope of the land outside the primary zone is 10 percent, then the width of your secondary zone would be 20 feet.

Sometimes to allow for fish and wildlife considerations, or to trap excess nutrients from crop fields and pastures, a wider SMZ might be in order.

Before we get into some of the “no-nos”, here are some activities you CAN perform within the SMZ. First, you can harvest trees. But, please contact a professional forester to determine which trees to harvest so that proper stand density is maintained. Have the logger drag the logs out of the SMZ with a cable. Trees or tree tops that fall in the stream during the harvest should be removed. You also CAN direct seed, hand plant or mechanically plant trees to establish a streamside forest.

Now, for practices to avoid in SMZs. Do not use wheeled or tracked vehicles in the primary zone. If you are careful, you may use vehicles in the secondary zone. But, I always err on the side of caution and stay out if at all possible.

While we are on the topic of vehicles and equipment, do not build roads or trails in your SMZ unless absolutely necessary for stream crossings. Portable sawmills and log landings are also taboo. And unless you are establishing a streamside forest, do not expose bare mineral soil, this includes leveling gullies, unless immediately seeded and mulched.

As with any good forest management, eliminate unrestricted grazing and wildfire from SMZs.

Lastly, use only pesticides that are labeled for use near water in controlling unwanted vegetation.

Following these simple guidelines will help insure that those who follow after us will enjoy the Ozark streams as much as we do today.

If you have any questions, contact your local Missouri Department of Conservation office or MU County Extension Center.

Article by: Hank Stelzer, University of MO Extension Forester

Submitted by Peter Maki, Forestry Communication Specialist, Top of the Ozarks RC&D