



**To:** CAM Stakeholders  
**From:** CAM Action Team  
**CAM Stakeholder Meeting Date:** 5/25/2016  
**Re:** Increase and Enhance Riparian Areas Action Proposal

### Executive Summary

The Hinkson Collaborative Adaptive Management (CAM) groups (Stakeholder, Science and Action) have discussed and reviewed research on the benefits of riparian areas to the overall health of Hinkson Creek. This action proposal seeks to develop a program to increase and enhance riparian areas along Hinkson Creek and its tributaries.

### Discussion

Riparian areas are critical to the health of Hinkson Creek. Because riparian areas are at the margin between water and land, their soil was most likely deposited by water and could be washed away by water. Protecting soil, streambanks, or water edges from excess erosion is an important function of riparian plants. Thus, properly functioning riparian areas absorb the water, nutrients, and energy from big events and use them to recover from disturbances while improving water quality. The toughness of riparian plants with dense, strong root systems, stems that slow floodwaters, and maybe woody debris that forms pools, adds to riparian stability and habitat diversity. This proposal seeks to increase riparian areas along Hinkson Creek and its tributaries.

The following items were extracted from the Hinkson Creek Action Brainstorming List produced by the CAM Stakeholders:

- 38 acres of property...could be acquired as a nature area
- University could plant a better buffer zone
- Get some projects together... to improve the stream buffer
- Put a 50' buffer on each side of the stream
- Spend at least as much money on mitigation as lawyer....
- Filter all water before it enters the creek
- Restrict ...development in the watershed
- <http://helpthehinkson.org/documents/HinksonCreekActionBrainstormingList2013updated.pdf>

From a cost-benefit standpoint, quality riparian areas are one of the best BMPs for water quality in the creek. Currently both the City and the County have Stream Buffer Ordinances that require land being developed with certain size stream corridors to reserve between 30 and 100+ feet of riparian buffer on each side of the creek. There are many opportunities to increase and/or improve the riparian areas throughout the watershed.

This proposal would like to explore:

- Acquiring riparian areas developed prior to stream buffer requirements were in place
- Acquiring existing undeveloped riparian areas that may or may not be developed but may be of



- special interest due to their location on Hinkson Creek or a Hinkson Creek tributary
- Expansion of existing buffer areas
- Expansion of Soil and Water Conservation practices or improving buffer areas
- Investigation of Water Quality trading to incentivize increasing buffers

Acquiring property would be completely voluntary, no taking through regulation or condemnation is proposed. Staff is aware of many locations directly on Hinkson Creek or one of its tributaries that would be beneficial in terms of preserving, expanding or enhancing the riparian area. Additionally, good riparian area is one of the most cost efficient practices for improving water quality. After a recent presentation from the Greenbelt Coalition to the Action Team, it became apparent to the Action Team that increasing riparian area requires more than simply acquiring property. The nature of this type of program is such that input from non-staff is critical. The following questions (at a minimum) must be fleshed out:

Who will own the riparian area?

Purchase fee simple or conservation easement?

Who maintains the area and what costs are associated? Who pays these costs?

How would these areas be used?

How do we approach property owners? Who pays to purchase these areas - cooperatively, individually, through grants?

This CAM Action Proposal includes the following steps:

- 1) Invite the Greenbelt Coalition to present to the the CAM Stakeholders to discuss the work involved in conservation of riparian areas.
- 2) Appoint a CAM Stakeholder subcommittee and chairperson comprised of Stakeholder members, Action Team members and others as deemed necessary to develop the details of a specific program to identify, purchase and preserve riparian areas on Hinkson Creek and its tributaries.

Many decisions that must be made to move this idea forward have a political nature to them. Therefore, it would be beneficial to have citizens from the Stakeholder group working on this issue rather than solely staff persons from the Action Team. Likewise, City and County staff would be beneficial to the group to help direct decisions that are feasible within the realm of City and County regulations.

It is proposed that the subcommittee would agree to meet regularly and within one year provide a final proposal identifying the specific steps needed to move forward with expanding and enhancing riparian areas. The Stakeholder group would be able to review and revise the final proposal and once approved, the program can move forward to the respective agencies for approval and funding. Having Stakeholder support and their involvement in development of the proposal would improve its standing with City Council and County Commission.

Dr. Hubbard's research shows that riparian areas absorb a significantly greater amount of runoff than



non-riparian areas. It is also known that these riparian areas act as filters removing pollutants before they reach the creek. Therefore, improved riparian areas could have a significant impact in reducing runoff volumes and improving water quality. The Action Team believes this proposal furthers the Mission to reverse the impaired status of Hinkson Creek.

<b>Fiscal Impact</b>
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Short-Term Impact: Minimal.

Long-Term Impact: Per acre costs to acquire and maintain the riparian area would be developed with this proposal.

<b>Suggested Stakeholder Action</b>
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Approve the proposal and appoint a subcommittee to investigate, evaluate and develop a plan to proceed with expanding and enhancing riparian areas in the Hinkson Creek watersheds.