We do not often give a lot of thought to areas of transition in our local landscapes. One very important transitional area is a buffer. A buffer, often called a riparian buffer by forestry professionals, is a natural boundary of trees and understory vegetation that separates land from water. The best buffer is one with a diverse mixture of mature trees with species that tolerate the wet soil conditions and that can support a nice understory. Aquatic buffers can improve water quality, prevent erosion, and provide habitat for wildlife. Tree roots filter out pollutants like nutrients, other dissolved chemicals and sediments. The roots of buffers stabilize stream banks to prevent channels from collapsing and eroding especially in areas where the stream channel experiences high peak flows or has twists and turns on the landscape. Aquatic organisms are generally extremely sensitive to temperature changes in their environment. Just as trees can provide shade for your home, trees also shade waterways during the summer months to keep daytime water temperatures from getting too high. Many bird species are attracted to stream buffer areas for nesting and feeding, so planting trees in this area can encourage new birds to your yard. Many tree species do very well in wet conditions and native species always work best. To find out more about what trees will work for your buffer you can explore the Riparian & Wetland Tree Planting Pocket Guide for North Carolina from the N.C. Forest Service.

http://ncforestservice.gov/water_quality/riparian_pocket_guide.htm

If you would like more information on local buffer protection ordinances or how to care for or start a new tree buffer in your yard, please contact the Town of Kernersville Stormwater Division at (336) 564-1600.