

Riparian Margin (Sheep Fencing)

Specification extract · Pages 43–45

What this document is

This is an extract of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) document “ACRES Co-operation Non-Productive Investments Specification”, Version 2.2, July 2026. It contains the pages covering the Riparian Margin (Sheep Fencing) action (pages 43–45 of the full specification).

Because the specification runs each action straight into the next, the first and last pages of this extract may also show the end or beginning of a neighbouring action. The section for this action starts on page 43 (the printed page number matches the page number in the full document).

Always check the current version

DAFM updates the specification from time to time. The full document is the authoritative version and should be consulted before undertaking any work. It is available from:

Full specification (PDF, opens at this action):

https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/f8e2ccf8/NPI_specifications_July_2026_2.pdf#page=43

ACRES NPI page on gov.ie:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/f5a48-agri-climate-rural-environment-scheme-acres/#non-productive-investments>

About this action on the ACRES CP website

<https://acresireland.ie/action-projects/npi-riparian-zone-sheep-fencing/>

2. Internal stone wall lengths must only be counted once and must be repaired and maintained on both sides.
3. Stone walls eligible to be paid at the 2-sides rate should be selected as Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 2-sides with the location and length marked on the map submitted.
4. Stone walls eligible to be paid at the half rate should be selected as Repair of Traditional Stone Wall 1 side with the location and length marked on the map submitted.
5. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. Each length applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
6. All sections of wall mapped for repair must be repaired to a solid, secure, and stock proof standard; unstable sections should be knocked and rebuilt.
7. Repair work must be done in the traditional style that is consistent with the existing wall and be evenly topped-off.
8. Walls must not be repaired using large machine placed boulders in a 'boulder wall' style and must not be repaired with mortar.
9. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional guidance

- Stones used to repair walls should be fallen stone from the existing wall. If additional stone is required, it must not be taken from other walls or from within the Zones of Notification around any archaeological sites or monuments.
- The stone used for repair should not be an integral part of a protected habitat type, such as limestone pavement or consist of dug up 'earth-fast' stone. Fallen and loose scattered stones may be used.
- Where there are mature trees along the wall, these must be retained, though suspended side branches may be cut back to facilitate wall repair.
- Embedded, 'earth-fast' stones must not be extracted from underlying archaeological walls if present.
- Stone should not be removed from other stonewalls or built structures. Any old structures within walls - stiles, pickets/ sheep passes, marker stones, should be retained.
- When applying Plant Protection Products and fertiliser, a one-metre margin should be left along the selected wall as it will allow the development of a beneficial nature corridor for flora and fauna. If spraying to control noxious and invasive weeds along the wall, they should be applied by spot treatment only.

Riparian Margin and Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing)

Objective

To help protect water quality by intercepting the loss of sediment and nutrients from soil surfaces after they have been mobilised. This measure also takes small areas out of production, thereby reducing the nutrient load while also supporting biodiversity.

Site suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- On CP forage parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland, Rough Grazing, Coastal, Winterage, Peatland, Scrub/Woodland, Low Input Peat Grassland, Corncrake, or Chough.
- This action cannot be selected within an archaeological monument buffer.
- In Non-CP parcels this action is not available on areas that are SAC/SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs, or Annex 1 Grasslands. **Allowed in Breeding Wader Hotspots but may fail screening in certain areas.**
- Riparian margin should be targeted to small streams, surface drains, rivers, and highrisk areas for example areas on the farm identified in the EPA Pollution Impact Potential-Phosphorus (PIP-P) maps (Rank 1-3) and verified as a flow delivery pathway for surface runoff to an adjacent watercourse.
- This action should not be applied for on lake or pond edges, inlets, and estuaries where it may impact on important habitats, breeding waders or migratory Geese and Swans (contact CP team for further information).

Note 11: Where an investment has been grant aided under TAMS or any other National/EU funded Agri-environment or Capital investment Scheme from 01 January 2018, this cannot fulfil part of the requirement for this ACRES NPI action.

Fencing-Barbed Wire, Fencing- Permanent Electric or Fencing-Sheep Wire NPIs cannot be used to fulfil the fencing requirement of this ACRES NPI.

Requirements

1. Erect a permanent fence to create riparian margin at least 3m wide. Select Riparian Margin if opting for post and wire fencing for bovines/equines or select Riparian Margin (Sheep fencing) if sheep fencing is required to create the margin.
2. The location and length (metres) must be identified on the LPIS parcel(s) and marked on the map submitted. Each margin applied for is only eligible for one NPI payment and once claimed must be maintained in the same location for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
3. To be eligible for this action, the minimum continuous length to be delivered is 10m. Riparian margin width is measured from the top of the bank or from the edge of an existing boundary (i.e. hedgerow, treeline, stone wall, or earthen bank) into the field. Where scrub/existing riparian vegetation is present, the margin width can be inclusive of this. The Riparian margin is in addition to any mandatory baseline requirements for applicable watercourses on the holding e.g. Certain holdings are required to exclude bovines from applicable watercourses by fencing 1.5m from top of the bank under

SMR2. In this case to be eligible for NPI Riparian Margin 3m watercourse would need to be fenced 4.5m from top of the bank.

4. Fencing posts must consist of timber or alternative metal/PVC/concrete posts, it is not permitted to attach wire fencing directly to trees.
5. If selecting Riparian Margin sheep fencing the lowest line of the sheep wire mesh must be 100mm above ground level to allow adequate clearance for wildlife.
6. The Riparian margin must be fenced off and stock proof to exclude all livestock and maintained for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
7. Chemical or organic fertiliser cannot be applied to the Riparian margin.
8. Plant Protection Products are not permitted, except for the spot treatment of noxious/invasive weeds.
9. Cutting is permitted but cannot take place between March 1st and August 31st.
10. Only one claim for payment is allowed per approved NPI-Annual Works Plan. This action can only be claimed for payment once delivered in accordance with NPI Specification.

Additional guidance

- An access point into the margin is advised to allow for management/maintenance if advised, as some margins may require cutting and removal of vegetation to reduce nutrient load.
- The use of heavy machinery should be avoided within 2m of the bank.
- Riparian margins are very susceptible to non-native invasive species e.g., Himalayan balsam and Giant hogweed. Monitor the riparian margin and carry out appropriate management/ removal of non-native invasive species where necessary.
- The fence should be placed at least 1m out from any riparian margin trees planted to prevent damage by livestock.

Riparian Margin Tree Planting

Objectives

To protect water quality by enhancing nutrient uptake while also supporting biodiversity. In some situations, new riparian margins will benefit from the planting of appropriate tree species to enhance erosion interception and provide improved bank stability. Tree roots and canopies will help intercept subsurface and aerial pollutant pathways.

Site suitability

- This action can only be selected on parcels with an Eligible hectare > 0.
- This action is available on CP and Non-CP LPIS parcels that will be claimed by the participant for the remainder of the ACRES contract.
- On CP forage parcels, this action can only be selected on fields with the following scorecards assigned or submitted: Grassland or Rough Grazing Scorecards.