

Live Staking

Unstable stream banks and soil erosion are becoming a topic of concern across the nation. Development, agriculture, and a variety of other disturbances can often remove plant life along streams. This can reduce ground infiltration, increase the flow of water, and potentially lead to erosion and unstable stream banks. Stream banks without vegetation are left without strong and deep root systems. Roots provide a natural anchor to hold soil and other plants and organisms in place. Bare or exposed soil particles are more likely to be washed away during weather or high water events. This can lead to many negative results including sediment pollution, loss of stream banks and valuable bottomland property, deeper water channels, and habitat loss.

Live staking is a common practice that is sustainable for any landowner. Live staking provides a low cost (or free) solution to unwanted stream problems. Live stakes are cuttings of native tree stems such as



Dogwood, Willow, Poplar, Mulberry, Sycamore, and Elderberry. Landowners often have these tree species growing on their property, and can easily cut stems for live staking. The best time to harvest and plant live stakes is during the dormant season, between November and February. For the best productivity, live stakes are inserted into the ground along the stream banks, about 3 to 6 feet apart. These limb cuttings or “live stakes” will root and eventually grow into a new tree, which will provide more root mass in the soil and enhance stream bank stability.

Live staking is a simple and cheap way to vegetate and stabilize your streamside property. By increasing root mass and woody growth along the bank, the stream and surrounding wildlife will benefit tremendously. The increase of quality ground cover and habitat will draw in small insects and other food sources for living organisms in the stream or river. The new trees and shrubs will also lower the amount of runoff during a storm event that enters the stream by slowing the rainwater and allowing it to seep back into the ground. Shade provided by the vegetation will keep the stream out of the sunlight and allow the water to be cool enough for native species like trout and salamanders to thrive. Stable stream banks also assure landowners that their land will not be washing away every time there’s a rain event. Stream bank stabilization is a good way to improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and properly manage streamside property.

For more information on live staking, email lnstreet1313@gmail.com or call 404-414-6261
Toe Talk is a monthly article series sponsored by the Toe-Cane Partnership highlighting watershed and community news. The Toe-Cane Partnership is working to improve water quality and gain associated economic benefits in the watershed by providing education and technical resources and implementing on-the-ground projects. For more information, see us on Facebook:
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