

Riparian Demonstration Sites

a guide to selection and development



What Are Demonstration Sites?

Demonstration sites test and display riparian management options. They are places where existing riparian management is modified and new techniques are incorporated. Examples include changes in livestock management such as: implementing a rotational grazing or riparian pasture system, adding new water sources, or applying new technology.

Selecting and developing a demonstration site often evolves from work completed by riparian health assessment crews or range consultants. Some are developed as a result of riparian awareness workshops and on site visits and discussions with landowners.

Information gathered from demonstration sites can illustrate to other producers and communities the costs and benefits associated with certain management techniques. Within a community, the information may help neighbours share information about riparian areas, their value, health and management to benefit the landowner and others in the community.



The Cows and Fish program works with cattle producers to set up demonstration sites that provide practical, local examples of riparian management options. This fact sheet will help you select and develop riparian demonstration sites to meet your needs.

The Value of Demonstration Sites

Demonstration sites are valuable educational and management tools for producers, community groups, and local communities because they:

- ◆ **Provide real examples of management options** that other producers can see, feel, examine, and discuss with the landowner;
- ◆ **Create an opportunity to cost share** between the landowner and other partners, which makes changes more affordable;
- ◆ **Act as a testing ground for grazing management techniques and strategies** (to find out what works) that a producer otherwise might not implement due to lack of technical support, insufficient information or no financial support;
- ◆ Help communities illustrate and evaluate riparian grazing strategies to **define the costs and benefits of riparian grazing options**, while implementing a monitoring program to track their success; and
- ◆ **Profile a proactive message** to others that producers and their communities are taking strides to ensure the health and productivity of our landscapes and that watersheds (including water quality and water quantity) are being maintained, improved and protected.

Checklist for Selecting Demonstration Sites

When reviewing potential demonstration projects, keep in mind that not all sites will be suitable. At a minimum, the site should have the following five qualities:

- ✓ **Riparian Area** Is there one present? If yes, what type of system (stream, river, lake or wetland) and what size is it?
- ✓ **Commitment** Is there a clear commitment from the landowner to make management changes for the long term? Are there technical support staff who are committed to assist with follow-up?
- ✓ **Access** Is the site easily accessible and is the landowner amenable to periodic visits by tours?
- ✓ **Riparian Recovery Potential** Can the site demonstrate improvement in health and other criteria in 5 years or less? Sites that recover rapidly help others notice the effects of changes in riparian management.
- ✓ **Practicality** Are practical management options proposed and will others find them useful?

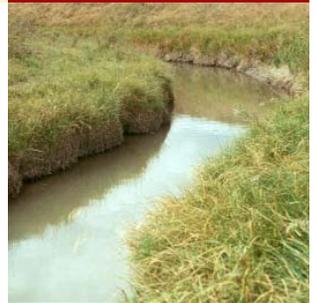
Use the remainder of the checklist to assist you in capturing additional details and as an aid to selecting the best site:

- ✓ **Selection Team** Who will help to review and select potential sites? Bring in knowledgeable partners.
- ✓ **Current Management** Describe the current management, issues and problems. Will the proposed changes deal effectively with the existing problem?
- ✓ **Geographic Duplication** Are there varied riparian management changes in the area to allow review of many options? Or is there considerable duplication of one option?
- ✓ **Proposed Management** Does the demonstration site fit with the landowner's pasture management plan? What changes or improvements are required (e.g. livestock distribution, rotation etc.)?
- ✓ **Costs** What are the estimated costs, both initial and maintenance costs? How will these costs be shared?
- ✓ **Benefits** What are the ecological, economic, and social benefits of the new management?
- ✓ **Funding** Is there opportunity for funding or should it be referred to another group or agency?
- ✓ **Community Support** Is there a high level of community support for a demonstration site in this area?
- ✓ **Monitoring** Who will monitor riparian health to measure your success? What is the monitoring schedule?
- ✓ **Follow-up** Who will interact with the landowner on implementation, development and upkeep?
- ✓ **Landowner Communication** Is the landowner able to communicate and willing to share experiences?

Photo Credits: Lorne Fitch



Callum Creek in the 1980s.



Callum Creek after five years of deferred grazing.



Callum Creek after eight years of deferred grazing. Note the appearance of willows.



Working with producers and communities on riparian awareness

Program Manager 403-381-5538

North/Central Alberta Coordinator 780-679-1289

Southern Alberta Coordinator 403-381-5377

Fax 403-381-5723 ♦ E-mail riparian@telusplanet.net

www.cowsandfish.org

Printed in Canada 02/02

Cows and Fish Partners

Producers & Community Groups, Alberta Cattle Commission, Trout Unlimited Canada, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment, Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Conservation Association

Funding Associates include **Canada**
AESAs, CARDF, CABIDF, Habitat Stewardship Program