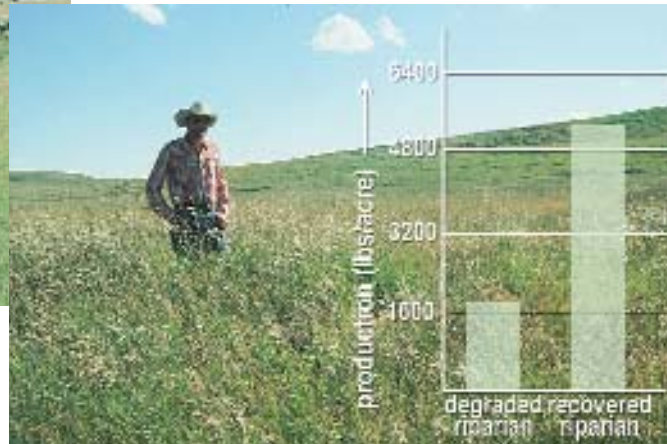


The Waldron Ranch - Making Change Pay Off



Callum Creek field under continuous grazing.

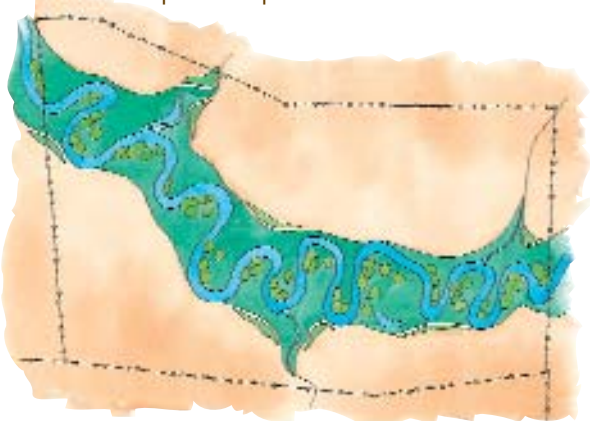
The Waldron Ranch, a producer-owned and managed co-operative in southwestern Alberta, became concerned in the 1980s over bank trampling and erosion of Callum Creek, and serious declines in range condition and productivity of the floodplain pastures. It was determined that the problem was a combination of a season-long, continuous style of use, poor distribution in many fields (including overuse of riparian areas) and prolonged drought conditions. Changes were made that included a reduction in grazing period, more frequent moves of livestock, and deferral of grazing, to provide growing season rest to plants. The most important change was a greater attention to carrying capacity to build flexibility into the grazing system. Following these changes dramatic increases in forage yields (up to three times as much as before) occurred on the floodplains, providing a much more stable forage base over a range of moisture conditions. Increased forage yields are a reflection of improvements in plant species composition and plant vigour. The new grazing rotation did not require any new capital costs like watering sites or fencing. The big change was in animal management—moving livestock from field to field as grazing use and the deferral sequence required.



A change to rotational grazing, from a season-long, continuous style, produced a significant response in forage production. Forage production went from pounds/acre in 1988 to tons/acre in 1997.



The recovery of Callum Creek has been accompanied by deep-rooted forage species, new willow growth and improved bank stability.



The riparian portion of this Waldron Ranch field makes up only 54% of the pasture, yet, in good range condition it can supply 82% of the forage. That's a big return for careful management of a small area.

Healthy riparian areas contribute substantially to forage yield in a pasture.