Where Do I Begin to Improve My Riparian Management?

You have already started by gaining an understanding of what riparian areas are and why they are valuable. Knowing how riparian areas work is key to managing them and to recognizing what might need fixing.

How do things look today?

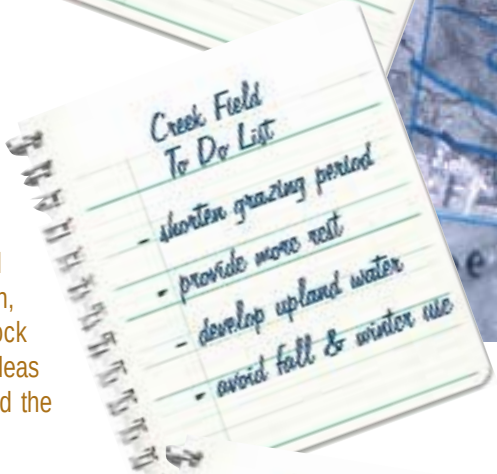
You might find it useful to "tune your eye" with a riparian health evaluation. This will give you a sense of the current condition, or health, of your riparian area. Combine these measurements with a similar range health evaluation for your upland pastures, to get a feel for the overall condition of your farm or ranch.

Where should my efforts be focused?

Use aerial photographs or some other map base to highlight areas that are "healthy", "healthy but with problems" and "unhealthy". Identify those riparian areas that have the highest priority for improvement. Set management objectives that address soil, water and vegetation needs in both riparian areas and uplands. These objectives should be realistic, attainable and measurable.

What are my options for management change?

This booklet provides some practical examples and some additional sources to explore. Cows and Fish, many agencies and other livestock producers may be able to suggest ideas or share experiences to help you find the right option for your operation.



How do I know if it's working?

Successful management doesn't come from a cookbook. Improvement comes from involvement and learning by doing. Imagination, flexibility, observation, patience, trial and sometimes error are required. Monitoring progress with riparian health evaluations and photographs will help you see changes over time.