



*In 1920, the riparian area of this river north of Edmonton was heavily wooded and the surrounding watershed shows few changes.*



*Eighty years later, clearing, settlement, drainage, channelization and roading have resulted in a significant loss of woody vegetation, extensive watershed change and loss of many riparian functions.*

Livestock grazing in Alberta dates back over a hundred years. Livestock producers of today can look back on a wealth of experience gained through surviving drought periods, dealing with the problems of overgrazing, ever-changing weather and markets. Nothing is perfect though and sometimes we need to be reminded of that history to ensure we don't repeat the mistakes of the past. Some acknowledgement of today's riparian issues would help us all move towards solving the problems. The issues we face didn't just occur; they have developed quietly, have gone largely unnoticed but are now cumulative in their effect.

Many ranchers and livestock operators acknowledge that riparian landscapes require another look and are beginning to think seriously about how to modify grazing to improve the health of these areas. Some have already figured this out and provide us with examples of careful range management practices which we can all learn from.

*How we face the issues surrounding riparian areas and the management decisions we make now will influence the future use, health and productivity of these green zones.*

