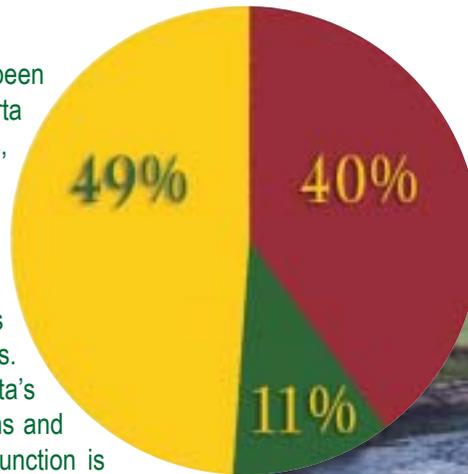




Where We Are

Information on riparian health has been collected in the settled portion of Alberta since 1995, on over 150 streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands. Measurements have been done randomly, so as not to bias the results and reaches are selected that are representative of much larger portions of the riparian landscape. More than 1000 reaches have been inventoried, representing over 2000 km of riparian areas along streams and rivers and around wetlands and lakes. The measurements indicate that about 11% of Alberta's riparian areas are healthy, 49% are healthy, with problems and 40% are unhealthy. Those figures tell us that riparian function is compromised in many of our watersheds. The results for Alberta are mirrored by the measurements for Saskatchewan and numerous states including Montana and Idaho. Lights are flashing; these results suggest we have issues to deal with that go well beyond what could be expected in the natural variation of riparian health.



Present - 2002

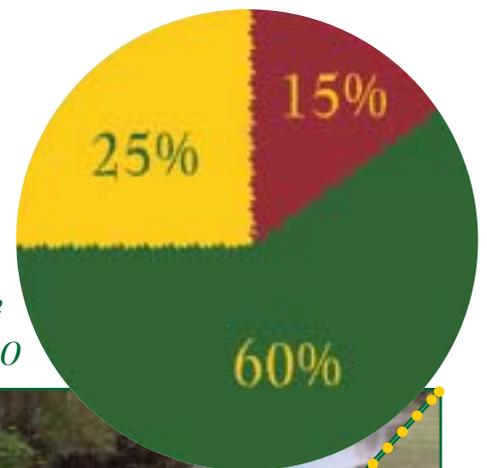


Where We Need to Be

Healthy riparian areas sustain us, especially their ability to store, filter and buffer water, combined with their agricultural and biodiversity values. Sustaining ourselves will require maintaining healthy riparian areas and restoring many that have declined in health.

What should our goals be for riparian health? Clearly we all want these landscapes to be resilient, stable and provide us a long list of ecological services, whether we are livestock producers, farmers, anglers, bird watchers, cottage owners, hikers or downstream water drinkers. Riparian health can vary across the province, from stream to stream and around a lake, ranging from healthy to unhealthy. Some of this variation relates to how riparian areas evolved. However, our use of these landscapes represents an additive and cumulative effect which has often compromised resiliency. That effect could be a consequence of what has happened on the reach or what has happened upstream or downstream. Additional variation in riparian health is due to our use of these areas. In some cases, that use has led to a decline in condition.

Our goals need to reflect that agriculture, urban development, transportation networks, recreational use, industrial uses and water management will have impacts and we cannot return to presettlement conditions. However, we should see progressively better riparian health as we adopt better land use practices, phase out some land uses and restore function to riparian landscapes. We will find that maintaining and restoring riparian health will have significant benefits.



*Future
2011-2030*



*We will either get the future we planned for. . .
or . . . the one we didn't plan for.*