



Tuning Your Eye

Diagnosis for Riparian Health

Riparian health evaluations tune your eyes and allow you to see the components or pieces that contribute significantly to health or, when missing or degraded, impair ecological functions, the foundation of health.

Riparian Health Questions

What is measured? These characteristics are evaluated to assess the health of riparian areas along streams and rivers or around lakes and wetlands:



How much of the riparian area is covered by vegetation?

Vegetation reduces the erosive force of raindrops and the velocity of water moving over a floodplain, along a streambank or onto a lakeshore. Think of vegetation like a mesh umbrella that slows and blunts the force of moving water.

Vegetation cover:

- reduces erosion;
- traps sediment and stabilizes banks and shores;
- absorbs and recycles nutrients;
- allows water to infiltrate to refill and recharge aquifers;
- reduces the rate of evaporation; and
- provides shelter and forage values.

The amount and type of vegetation present determines how well these services are performed.



>95% cover



80% cover



<75% cover



As vegetation cover diminishes, the amount of runoff and sediment increases. That can affect water quality and quantity.