



Show me the Riparian Area

You've seen them, crossed them, and walked in them; you may live on one. Riparian areas are the green zones around lakes and wetlands, the emerald threads of vegetation that border rivers and streams and the lush fringe in valleys. Riparian areas are transitional; they exist between the surface water of a river, wetland or lake and the surrounding drier upland. Think of them as "wetter than dry" but "drier than wet". Riparian areas are rarely uniform and show lots of variation. What is common to all of them is the interaction of water, soil and vegetation. A combination of the following clues will help you solve the mystery of what is "riparian".

Clue 1



Lots of water is present, seasonally or regularly and that water is either on the surface or it's close to the surface.



Riparian areas are called many things. These are some of the terms used to describe them: shores, floodplain, bottomland, bogs, muskeg, slough, wetland, seep, floodprone, marsh, pothole and spring. Lentic riparian areas are associated with still water systems like lakes and wetlands. Lotic riparian areas are found along rivers and streams.

Clue 2



Vegetation is present that responds to, requires and survives in abundant water.

Clue 3



Soils have been modified by abundant water (as in high water tables), stream or lake processes (like sediment deposition) and lush, productive vegetation.