

# Community Stories

## *Municipal District of Ranchland*



Norine Ambrose

*Our vision is to maintain our land and water and be good custodians of the headwaters.*



Norine Ambrose

### About Us

The M.D. of Ranchland is located along Highway 22 in the foothills of Alberta's Eastern Slopes. This area of south-western Alberta includes numerous creeks that form the headwaters of a part of the Oldman River Drainage.

We are a community group made up of ranchers, municipal representatives, agricultural service board members, and agricultural fieldmen that represent the 103 people living in the Municipal District of Ranchland.

After the severe flood of 1995, we saw the need to work more together and saw our community as part of a bigger area. The flood changed how neighbours within the municipality cooperate to manage their riparian areas.

## What People are Saying.....

Ron Davis, Owner of the Nelson Creek Ranch

"Understanding that any problem here will be amplified further down, we have the opportunity to protect the headwaters. Many of Alberta's headwaters are on the eastern slopes where we live, so we're doing what we can. I think the one thing the environmental community sees now, though, is the benefits of working together with ranchers and the benefits of cows to the range. We look at the industrial development in our M.D. and see how much damage it causes to the watershed. I believe more people see the environmental benefits of grazing".

Twyla Cyr,  
Administrator, M.D. of  
Ranchland

"These people care about the land, and they make good stewards of the headwaters streams coming out of here. They do their best to maintain the land and the water because their lives depend on it".

# What We Have Achieved. . .



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## Conducting riparian health assessments along local creeks



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- ◆ As a result of our interest in the health of streams and riparian areas, we decided to assess the entire watershed. So the M.D. brought in the Cows and Fish Program. We are currently working with Cows and Fish to use the riparian health assessment results to improve riparian management in the M.D.
- ◆ The M.D. has hosted numerous meetings and workshops on riparian health and management, with assistance from the Cows and Fish program.
- ◆ We wanted to improve our management practices and try new management techniques. Thus, in 1998, the M.D. invited interested ranchers to take part in demonstration site development with financial assistance from the M.D. of Ranchland, Cows and Fish and Alberta Environmentally Sustainable Agriculture. With the help of a number of ranchers, demonstration sites were set up to highlight the use of riparian pastures and off-stream watering sites. As a group, we toured the demonstration sites in 1999. Each producer showed how management had led to positive results in the riparian area, as well as providing information on the specific details of the management options on their place.
- ◆ We held a riparian health assessment field day, with the Cows and Fish program. Using local creeks, producers were shown how to measure riparian health. Those ranchers that participated in the field component found it really helped them understand the key pieces of riparian areas and what to look for to measure health.
- ◆ The project is completed each year with a Beef & Bean Bash. Ranchers get together for a tour of the field projects, along with a supper and guest speakers. The evening ends with an opportunity for participants to discuss new ideas, details of their projects and future plans.

## Our Future Plans

- ◆ Continue to educate ourselves and encourage riparian health in the municipality.
- ◆ Measure the riparian health of several watersheds within the municipality.
- ◆ Provide incentives to use stream watering systems or establish riparian grazing pastures to prevent year round cattle access to streams.
- ◆ Provide an example for others to be proactive and look after downstream water users.

**For more information please contact:  
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**Working with producers and  
communities on riparian awareness**

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### **Cows and Fish Partners**

Producers & Community Groups, Alberta Beef Producers, Trout Unlimited Canada, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Agriculture, Food & Rural Development, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment, Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Conservation Association

### **Funding Associates include**

AESA, CARD, CABIDF

