



# Community Stories

## Upper Little Bow Basin Water Users Association



Michael Uchikura

*Our goal is to improve riverine environmental health and water quality of the upper Little Bow River through improved agriculture land use practices which will not detract from the land-user's income.*

### About Us

We are a group of landowners who live and farm along the Little Bow River. Following concern over pollution in the Little Bow River and the downstream impacts, we got together to develop a Riparian Initiative Program.

The Upper Little Bow Basin Water Users Association encompasses the upper reach of the Little Bow River, from near the town of High River to Little Bow Reservoir - a distance spanning almost 55 km. When we first started, we consisted of 32 landowners, or 75% of the families in the area.

The Little Bow River begins near High River in southwestern Alberta and flows southeast past Carmangay. It then winds to the northeast where it is confined in the Travers Reservoir before continuing on to the southeast, eventually joining with the Oldman River south of Turin. The water held back in the reservoir is an important resource for the region during the hot, dry summer months.

### What People are Saying.

**Gordon Fraser,  
landowner along the Upper  
Little Bow**

*"The program has given me the motivation to make land use changes that I have thought of doing for quite some time to help the creek."*

**Shirley Pickering,  
ULBBWUA Chair**

*"The Riparian Initiative Program has made our community more aware of their impacts on the health of the river, as well as to look for some potential benefits in better riparian and rangeland management practices."*

# What We Have Achieved. . .



Suzanne Witham



Kerry O'Shaugnessy

*Some reaches of the upper Little Bow River are lined with cattails and sedges (above), while others show some shrub cover (below).*



Michael Gerrand

- ◆ Since we started, in 1998, we have held educational workshops and public involvement activities. We have visited Cows and Fish demonstration and profile sites and learned about their success in restoring the health of creeks and rivers. Some of our members have participated in riparian awareness and riparian health assessment workshops to help us better monitor changes in riparian health.
- ◆ Recognizing that strong partnerships are critical to the success of our riparian initiative, we have given presentations to a variety of groups and people including local municipal councils bordering the river, local MLA's and schools.
- ◆ Five demonstration sites have been selected along the Upper Little Bow River. These sites are being used to demonstrate improved riparian management practices. The landowners have agreed to let their sites be monitored and used to educate other landowners on the benefits of good riparian management.
- ◆ We have set up an informal volunteer river health watch that notifies our chairman of significant visible negative water quality changes (algal blooms, turbidity, dead fish, etc.) as well as flow changes or high runoff. Such events are documented where possible.
- ◆ In 1999-2000 we worked in cooperation with Alberta Environment, the Cows and Fish program and PFRA, to collect baseline data on the current state of the river including land use, water quality and riparian health surveys.

## Plans for the Future Include:

- ◆ Find and establish further demonstration sites.
- ◆ Hold a riparian health assessment field day and a range field day for landowners along the river.
- ◆ Present the results of our baseline surveys to our members.
- ◆ Expand education of the broader community through examples and demonstrations.

*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 Cattle Commission, 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

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