

Checklist for Action

Looking to Maintain or Improve Riparian Health?

Riparian areas, those areas of water-loving vegetation next to streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands, are extremely important for water quality and quantity improvement, fish and wildlife habitat, primary production, flood reduction and many other functions. These areas are very valuable for agriculture and recreational users—values and functions that are present when they are healthy and functioning.



What are can you do to improve riparian health?

Everyone can take actions to benefit riparian areas, whether you own riparian land or just visit it.

Check the following actions that are applicable to you:

- Find out if the riparian area is healthy** (check out our website or call us to determine how). **Set goals** that maintain or improve how the site performs its ecological functions



Got livestock? Calculate your stocking rates. Does pasture production meet livestock needs and do you ensure enough annual growth remains to support long term plant health?

Practice careful spring management. Riparian areas are vulnerable to compaction in the spring, so avoid driving on or grazing when banks and shorelines are saturated. Early use can severely impacts the plants throughout the rest of the growing season.



Provide rest during the growing season, which allows plants to regrow and thrive. Whether you are grazing the area or using it for recreation, constant use will reduce riparian health—plants and soil must have rest. Determine how long to graze using your stocking rate and pasture *Balance Sheet*.

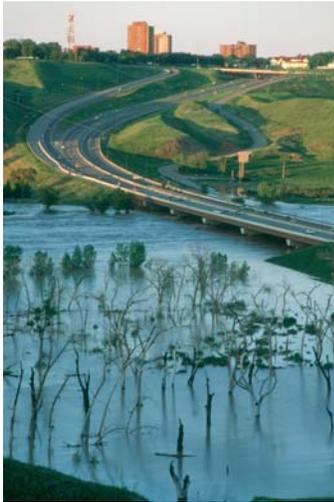
Distribute pressure throughout the area. Riparian areas are often hotspots of activity for people, pets and livestock, but we can reduce our impacts by: For livestock: place minerals/oilers away from the waters edge and outside riparian areas; provide alternate water sources; and fence 'like with like' units for better distribution. For recreation: stay on designated trails, limit your time in the riparian area if designated trails are not present and consider using non-riparian areas for recreation.



☑ **Control invasive weeds.** These plants replace native, more deep rooted species and alter fish and wildlife habitat. Review identification and control with a rural municipality agriculture fieldman or contact the Alberta Invasive Plant Council (www.invasiveplants.ab.ca).



☑ **Give the area several years of rest,** if you want rapid recovery, especially of woody plants in your riparian area. Temporarily fence or prevent access to address ‘hot spots’.



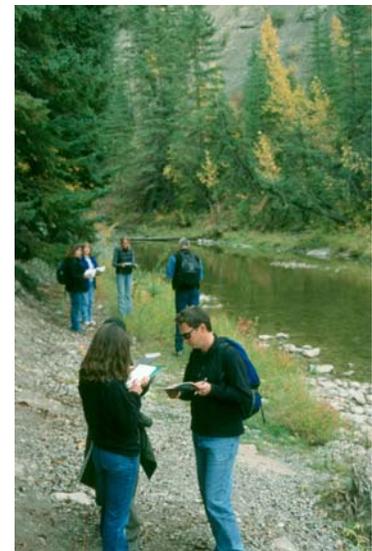
☑ **Create a management plan** for your riparian area and surrounding land (whether urban park, acreage, lakefront or a farm or ranch). Cows and Fish can offer management techniques to your group or community—just contact us. Farmers and ranchers can also access mentors through Sustainable Grazing Mentorship Program; lakefront owners can access the Homesite Assessment (www.livingbywater.ca).

☑ **Get to know your watershed and get involved.** Activities in the entire area may alter flow or water levels, impacting your riparian area. Many local watersheds have stewardship groups (visit www.ab.stewardshipcanada.ca) and larger regions have watershed councils (www.waterforlife.alberta.ca) working on status reports and management plans.

☑ **Continue learning.** Contact Cows and Fish to learn more about management techniques or if you want to attend a course, workshop and field day.



Remember: Riparian management should maintain and improve existing plant communities, as well as the integrity of the physical characteristics of the riparian area. Minimise human impacts along the shore and prevent any further decline in riparian health.



Working with producers and communities on riparian awareness

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