

Cows and Fish

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society



2010-11 Program Highlights

This past year has been a rewarding and successful year for Cows and Fish. We delivered an extensive voluntary riparian stewardship program, with support from diverse organizations and funders. As a cornerstone of our program mandate, we continue to provide provincial riparian programming through education and awareness to achieve healthier riparian areas, cleaner water and healthier landscapes. This year was important for reconnecting and renewing relationships and re-engaging in areas we had not participated due to reduced funding in the previous year. We continued to work on riparian management, with other delivery programs as well as strategic supporters, including rural municipalities and our members: Alberta Beef Producers, Trout Unlimited Canada, Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment, and Alberta Conservation Association.

Our long-term impact continues to grow, having worked on riparian tools and extension since 1992. Our materials, expertise and requests for involvement have faced high demand: 15,000 riparian health field workbooks and more than 58,000 *Caring for the Green Zone* booklets have been provided, up to and including those requested this year. As part of our extensive education and awareness efforts, as well as hands-on learning, we have spoken to a cumulative total of about 55,000 people in 2,250 activities. A large number of materials (over 4,100 copies) were mailed out this year, based on 59 requests, to three countries, including 5 Canadian provinces and 3 American states. We also updated and reprinted two factsheets: *Looking at my Streambank* and *Looking at my Lakeshore* (both riparian health checklists). We also reprinted our *A Field Guide to Common Riparian Plants of Alberta*. We continue to expand and add to our website, including emphasising our Upcoming Events section more and adding new media.

In 2010-11 we:

- **Spoke to over 4,800 people.** These included agricultural producers, lakeshore residents, youth, conservation groups, natural resource managers, and the general public, including:
 - At least 679 agricultural producers
 - 1,554 youth reached through 239 *Cows, Fish, Cattledogs and Kids!* games
- **Delivered over 270 riparian related presentations/events on** riparian areas, their health, management, and community-led action, many of these to watershed, stewardship groups
 - Of these, we held **41 field-based activities** with about **713 people**, including 143 agricultural producers
- **Helped landowners and staff complete 8 new digital stories** profiling numerous landowners' stewardship efforts and sharing key riparian ecology and management messages, 7 which were part of our REAL Beef initiative – Ranchers Enhancing Alberta Landscapes
- **Developed 5 podcasts** and a new website section with the ability to subscribe to our site to ensure subscribers are updated of new podcasts.

In 2010, Cows and Fish evaluated:

- **151 riparian health sites**, for a total of over 2,200 since 1997, with 2,059 being unique sites
- **38 of these riparian health sites were revisits** from previous work (31 exactly same site; 7 sites shared common area from past work)
- **40 different** riparian systems along streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands: one large river, 14 lakes and wetlands and 25 streams and small rivers

As part of this work, **76 individual reports** on riparian health and **6 community** or project area reports have been prepared, summarising riparian health results and highlighting areas for management

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consideration. This work is integral to our community based work, providing the current status of riparian health, and encouraging landowners and their communities to make management changes to improve riparian health. In 2010, we completed extensive community riparian health work with both large urban municipalities and small rural agricultural based stewardship groups.

Cows and Fish is committed to ‘**train the trainer**’, increasing skills, and providing expertise to resource managers. This year we led **7** Alberta workshops on riparian areas and extension program delivery. Topics included hands-on field training in riparian and range health; range and pasture management applications; riparian ecology; lessons learned from our program delivery; and delivery effective presentations. In addition, we were asked by Alberta Ecotrust to present our experiences to various environmental and conservation organisation and government staff at two provincial workshop, in order to maximise engagement in conservation and stewardship efforts. As in past years, we were asked to provide support and share our expertise with other jurisdictions, and this year, in addition to support from Alberta through mail, phone and email, we also presented in Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

This year we had a wide diversity of request for **use of our images and illustrations**, as well as many on-line self-downloads of our shared imagery for educational purposes. Requests that came through our staff included use of wording in signage for Mosquito Lake in Woodland County, images for a presentation to Alberta Land Surveyors students, use in Southeastern Alberta Watershed Alliance (SEAWA) newsletter, images for the Exhibitor Centre at the Bar U Historic Site and use of images and captions to form a presentation on Canadian Geographic’s Canadian Atlas Online.

We shared our expertise on the **Alberta Water Council’s** Riparian Land Conservation and Management Team. In addition to providing awareness and riparian health monitoring, we supported many local **stewardship and watershed groups** with planning and issues identification. We supported **Watershed Planning and Advisory Committees**: Milk River Watershed Council Canada (Monitoring Team); Oldman Watershed Council (Rural Team - workshops; Urban Team - information for display creation; Integrated Watershed Management Plan Core Team member); Bow River Basin Council (advice to Policy and Legislation Committee; Watershed Management Plan Phase 2 team member); Red Deer River Watershed Alliance (Communication and Education committee member; Community Forums presentations); Battle River Watershed Alliance (Communication and Education committee member; State of the Watershed riparian health chapter) and partner on workshop delivery for Athabasca Watershed Council, North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance and Beaver River Watershed Alliance.

We had a wide diversity of opportunities to provide content and were **interviewed** by numerous media outlets, including: Umbel Communications (for Bow River Basin Council’s Preserving Our Lifeline newsletter); CTV Television: (discussion about how our food choices affect landscape health); Red Deer Advocate, Rockyview Weekly, Cochrane Eagle and Innisfail Province (newspapers, regarding sustainable food workshops and stewardship by producers); Lacombe Radio Sunny 94 (leading to three different stories on stewardship), Call of the Land (radio; highlighting the importance of agricultural stewardship) and Western Producer (newspaper, profiling ranchers and a sustainable food workshop and ranch tour).

Our **evaluation** results clearly indicate we are having an impact, as shown in these examples: When asked what value they got from a workshop, in which our aim was to get consumers to better understand and become aware of the management choices being made to care for our land and water, one participant said: *“Bringing to my attention things that I may not have thought of in managing land, to not only produce good food but to sustain the land.”* Our staff continue to be a key strength of our organisation’s success and ensure we have impact. When asked what the strength of a workshop was, one participant said: *“The knowledge and passion of the staff.”*