

Producer Stories

From Alberta Farms and Ranches

Gerald Lyon - Nanton, Alberta

Gerald Lyon's family has owned land in the Nanton area for more than 50 years. Gerald currently lives on the family farm, which includes one quarter section of pastureland that Mosquito Creek flows through.

Historically this pasture was used for continuous summer long grazing. Ten years ago, Gerald noticed plant communities were becoming less productive and damage to the streambanks was occurring from livestock hoof action and trampling. As a result, he made the management decision to remove all livestock grazing from this pasture in an attempt to recover the upland and riparian vegetation.

Gerald's interest in maintaining his land in a productive and healthy state, motivated him to learn how the changes to the riparian area on his land could impact the overall health of Mosquito Creek and its watershed. Through educational opportunities such as the Cows and Fish program, he learned that healthy riparian areas along Mosquito Creek could improve water quality by acting as a filter for sediments and nutrients, and provide high quality forage for livestock and wildlife.

Through his involvement with the Lower Mosquito Creek Water Users Association, he is now sharing what he has learned and his management experience with others.

Gerald has an individual passion for landscape health and is very committed to community-based action addressing riparian land use issues on Mosquito Creek.



Management Highlights

- * 320 acres native and tame grass in Municipal District of Willow Creek along Mosquito Creek
- * historical summer grazing until 1991
- * since 1991, long-term rest strategy implemented with no grazing
- * over the past 10 years, riparian health has improved substantially and riparian vegetation has regenerated



Successful Riparian Management

Rest = Recovery

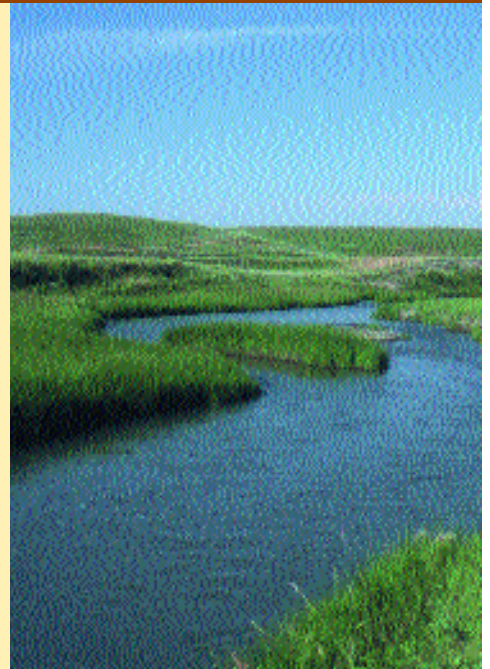
Gerald recognises that riparian areas are resilient but recovery may take a long time, even with only natural disturbance and no livestock grazing. The results of this long-term rest strategy are exciting, showing that improvement of native upland and riparian health can be achieved, even when plant communities have been heavily impacted in the past.

It is because of this rest that deep-rooted sedge communities are establishing on newly developing floodplains. Woody shrub species such as sandbar willow, beaked willow, yellow willow and silver berry are becoming well established along the streambanks and lower floodplain.



These healthier plant communities will protect the streambanks from the erosive forces of floodwaters, and provide additional forage for livestock and wildlife.

Gerald's management strategies provide a good example of the recovery potential for the lower reaches of Mosquito Creek.



Future Plans

Gerald is willing to change management practices to include livestock as a method to control plant biomass if necessary. He believes the maximum stocking rate on his land is 30 head per quarter section under a controlled grazing strategy. This would allow for continued establishment of willow and sedge communities.

Although this riparian area will be permanently flooded by a new reservoir development in the spring of 2003, Gerald plans to continue working with the Cows and Fish program to monitor and assess changes until then. Gerald also continues to play an active role in community-based riparian programs through his membership with the Lower Mosquito Creek Water Users Association.

Photo Credits: Jaime Iwaasa
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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 
AESAs, CARDF, CABIDF, Habitat Stewardship Program

