

# Cows and Fish

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society

## Strategic Plan

2017-2020



Our Vision

*Healthy, functioning riparian areas for the benefit of all*

Our Mission

*To promote healthy landscapes by fostering riparian stewardship*

## Introduction

Cows and Fish (Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society) is a non-profit organization working with agricultural producers, urban and rural landowners, communities, watershed groups, and resource managers since 1992 to improve the management of riparian, water and natural resources. Cows and Fish supports proactive, voluntary stewardship by building capacity for change. We create increased awareness, knowledge and skills by developing riparian management tools, motivating people to consider the changes necessary, and measuring the difference those changes make in landscape health. We have led the establishment of a widely accepted and utilized method for evaluating riparian health across many Canadian provinces. Specifically, Cows and Fish helps people recognize the importance of healthy ecosystems and how their personal actions influence ecological function, leading to increased use of management that benefits the landscape and riparian health.

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Riparian areas are the "green zones" of water-loving vegetation along streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and springs; when healthy, these areas provide many key ecological functions.

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## Background

Cows and Fish is a recognized and trusted organisation throughout Alberta's agriculture and conservation community. It is seen as a key partner in riparian work. This reputation was built by using an respectful approach focused on going where we are invited, providing technical expertise and encouragement, focussing on sound process and providing outreach and extension that meets the landowner and community needs to build community capacity. Providing strategic direction and support to the Cows and Fish organization is a board, with directors representing member organisations and government departments:

- Alberta Beef Producers
- Canadian Cattlemen's Association
- Trout Unlimited Canada
- Independents
- Alberta Agriculture and Forestry (ex-officio)
- Alberta Environment and Parks (ex-officio)

It is important that Cows and Fish continue to meet current levels of demand and some growth, while maintaining flexibility to meet changing agriculture, policy and conservation drivers. Continuing to reach out to past members and future potential partners will build the continuity and ongoing commitment to help landowners and groups continue to learn and make progress as their ability, needs and interests change.

## Operating Principles

| Process Oriented   | People and Community  | Delivery Emphasis  | Scientific Strength   | Practical Approach  |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Utilize Cows and Fish Process</li> <li>Begin with basic awareness and education messages</li> <li>Recognize and support community based action and decision making</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respect and empathize with challenges to improving riparian health</li> <li>Acknowledge value of voluntary approach to stewardship</li> <li>Landowners, managers and users decision and actions determine riparian health</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"we go where we are invited"</li> <li>Use appropriate scale to work</li> <li>Be realistic and honest about impacts without blame and focus on how to improve</li> <li>Non-regulatory approach focuses on communication, awareness and building relationships</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Riparian areas may be small but their importance is large</li> <li>Experts on riparian areas</li> <li>Riparian health is key measurement metric</li> <li>Program evaluation and social science inform tool development and program delivery</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support management changes that are practical, economical, restorative and sustainable</li> <li>Accomplish a lot with available resources</li> <li>Organizational learning is key to growth and adaptation.</li> </ul> |

## Cows and Fish Logic Model

The following logic model outlines the intent outcomes that Cows and Fish will work to achieve. The outcomes are individual and community focused and incremental, meaning this is a chain of results that link activities to the expected learnings, actions and benefits. This logic model will:

- Provide a line-of-sight to guide decision making, performance measurement and evaluation.
- Demonstrate how priority strategies and actions directly contribute to achieving the intended outcomes.
- Emphasize the importance of collaboration and integration to achieve intended outcomes

There are certain biases and preconceived notions that the people in an organisation bring to the table. Understanding and articulating these assumptions is important awareness for our organisation. Some of our assumptions of who we are, how we will work and deliver program include:

### Assumptions

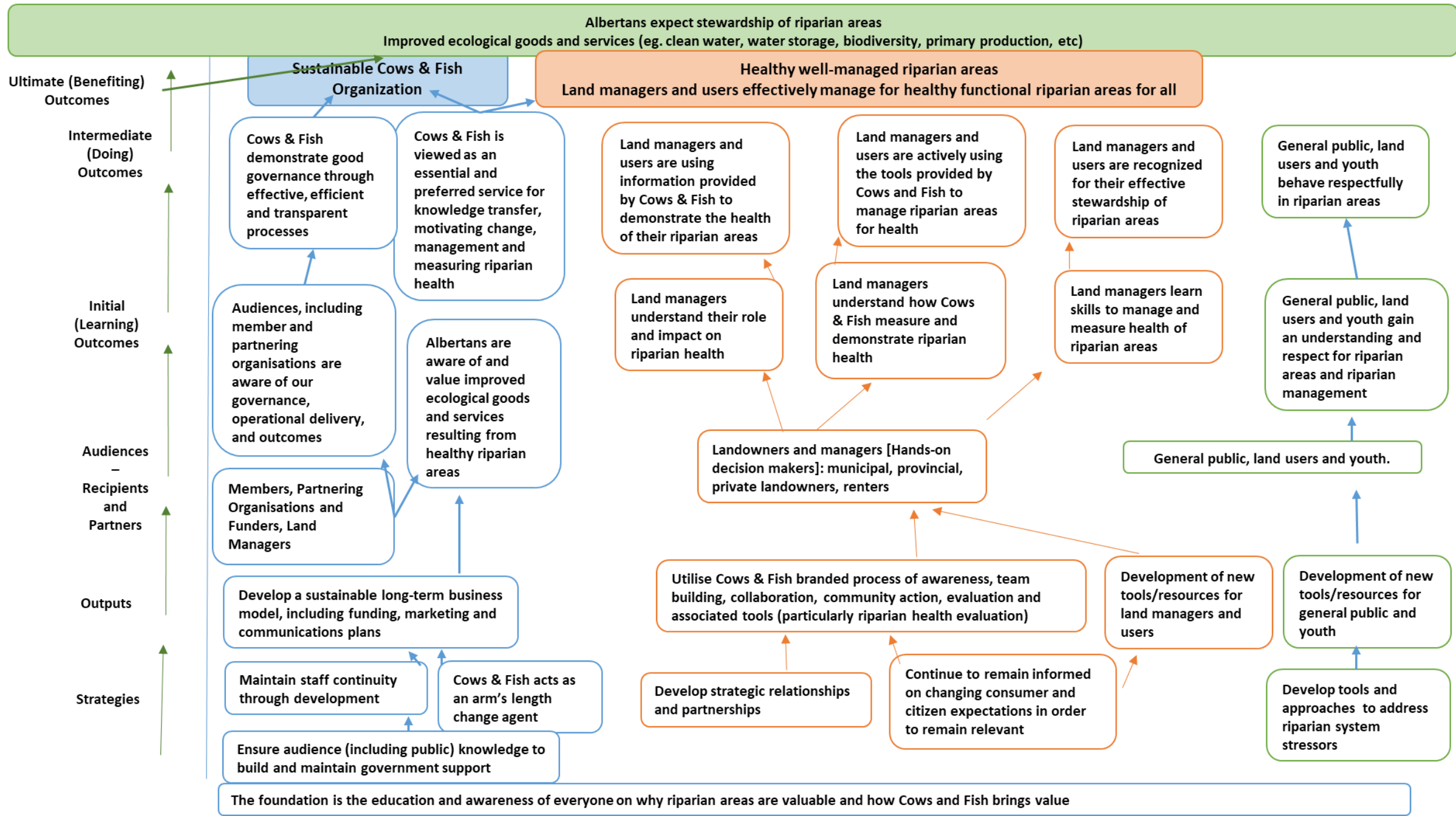
- Cows and Fish is a unique brand and organisation
- Incorporates the backing of a diverse and dedicated board
- Requires experienced and dedicated staff
- Ensures quality extension materials and methodology
- Our work includes a strong and effective engagement process
- Land uses (including agriculture) and ecological function will sometimes conflict
- We have and will maintain a high technical capacity for measuring and reporting
- The demand put on Cows and Fish by various audiences will continue to increase
- Government of Alberta funding will remain somewhat constant
- More organisations will seek to partner and work with Cows and Fish in the future
- Audiences and the public value (or will value) healthy riparian areas
- Cows and Fish is an arms-length mechanism for agencies and organisations to achieve their goals
- Awareness and education lead to shifts in behaviour which leads to improvement in riparian health

Cows and Fish is a non-profit collaborative organization and therefore is subject to forces outside of the organisation. These external factors may have a positive or negative effect on the success of Cows and Fish reaching our desired outcomes. It is important we are aware of these factors although often we will have little to no control over them.

#### External Factors

- Government and other funding is multi-faceted and changes over time, and can be insecure at times
- Changing government and industry or sector mandates and priorities
- Increased amount of rented lands and an aging agricultural sector make it challenging to work with landowners
- Food sustainability movement is developing and not fully understood
- Environmental Goods and Services (EGS) concepts or payment systems are not solidified or financially mature
- Landowner and audience participation and modes of interaction may change, including decline
- In-person extension attendance has generally declined across Alberta a variety of reason
- New opportunities (e.g. climate change, beef sustainability verification, mitigation off-sets, etc.) may arise which Cows and Fish may not have the capacity to participate in
- Watershed groups and local community stewardship groups are not as active as they were in the past, although this varies based on volunteer burnout, issues urgency, funding, and other changing external factors.

Cows & Fish Logic Model – see pg below



## Cows and Fish Success Factors – Metrics and Measures

Goals are described, where applicable or suggested, and priority indicators are marked with an asterisk \*.

| Expected Results  | Indicators   | Data Sources  | Baseline Data                                      |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Initial Outcomes:</b>  |  |   |  |
| <p><b>Audiences, including member and partnering organisations are aware of our governance, operational delivery, and outcomes</b></p> <p>Additional thoughts:<br/>                     For funders, they need to be comfortable w/ what we achieve<br/>                     For land managers, we want them to be comfortable/trust C&amp;F<br/>                     For general public / youth, we want them to be aware, interested...the general public is part of the strategies that are to get funders (Gov) happy/satisfied</p> | <p><i>Funders &amp; supporting organisations primarily:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-distribution of an annual report*</li> <li>-#s of requests for annual reports</li> <li>-#s/ feedback / questions from individuals</li> <li>-ease of funding access [internal discussion]</li> <li>-# of funders in various categories (eg. new, long-term, multi-yr, over X\$'s and % funding in those categories; portfolio mix)*</li> <li>-# new individuals or groups or loss of same [only measurable for funders]</li> <li>-effort/resources spent in grant applications &amp; reporting*</li> <li>-extent/mentions in other plans, funding requests (eg. gov. riparian BMP funding), provincial strategies, media, references in others' documents*</li> <li>-sharing of stories (showing how we helped people &amp; showing integrity)*</li> <li>-Description / tally of board members activities to show awareness in their organisations*</li> <li>-# opportunities that have arisen from board members connections (eg. invitations to present, train staff, to partner)*</li> </ul> <p><i>Strategies:</i><br/>                     [sharing how money was spent in broad reporting]</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-internal: repeat success (eg. # of same funders for similar work)</li> <li>-based on financial &amp; budget summaries prep'd for this purpose</li> <li>-include concrete profiles where a demonstrable impact with 1-3 members in annual reporting or bi-annual newsletter*</li> <li>-staff tracking of approx. time spent and # of applications done</li> <li>-AB AF data</li> <li>-Board member data (eg. articles in newsletters or annual reports, presentations to colleagues) [<u>Goal: 3 opportunities/yr</u>]</li> <li>-members report on places and situations in their organisations, to show ongoing programming relevance,</li> </ul> | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |

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|   | <p>-awards received*</p> <p>-# of thank you letters/ meetings with funders [board &amp; staff], making follow up connections, personal connections [and follow up feedback gathered incl. on priorities...for major funders, indicate if there is a targeted strategy*]</p> <p>-do a mixer or thank you event (profile work &amp; success too)-to allow funders to see the bigger role/ other aspects that other funders are 'getting']</p> <p>-calibrated/targeted reports/ updates to funders to meet current funder priorities</p> <p>-marketing tool that is a professionally designed annual report*</p> <p>-relationship building to get known or keep familiar with Cows and Fish*</p> | <p>collaborative work, where C&amp;F is contributing to <u>[Goal: 3 opportunities/yr]*</u></p> <p>-staff tally of report #s</p> <p>-completion of new, short annual report for sharing widely <i>[Goal: starting 2017-18]*</i></p> <p>-completion of full program annual report *</p> <p>-board and staff reporting</p> <p>-# meetings or other interactions by board and staff with funders or other strategic partners opportunities (new vs existing) <u>[Goal: 1-3 for each Board member &amp; senior staff/yr]*</u></p> <p>-# attendees at thank you or other profile events <u>[Goal 1 event in 3 yrs; 50 attendees]</u></p> |  |
| <p><b>Albertans are aware of and value improved ecological goods and services resulting from healthy riparian areas</b></p> | <p>-# people attended extension activities [tracking various categories of activities and audience types]* <u>[Goal: 120 events and 6,000 people annually]</u></p> <p>-public polls (maybe led by academics) results, and maybe ability to answer definitions</p> <p><i>Strategies:</i></p>   | <p>-extension tracking file (staff) [Existing req'd]*</p>  | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |

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|   | <p>-development of strategies via academics, to reach outcomes (eg. Population Research Centre, Lethbridge College)</p> <p>-try and tease out 'getting the message' and then, later, what are they doing once they get the message?</p> <p>-getting opportunities to present/meet with boards, etc [build a list, including those opportunities where many members are present]*</p> <p>-# of social media uses, mentions/ likes* [strategy is to update Board on social media approach] [Goal: Facebook: <u>increase in followers/yr; Twitter: increase in followers with average 2 links/ retweets or likes per day</u>]</p> <p>-new website launched*</p> <p>-#s and type of use of website* [Goal <u>25,000 page views annually; increase mobile device use from 11%</u>]</p> <p>-updates added to websites, ongoing to profile new work*</p> <p>-Strategy: develop a riparian youth education program</p> <p>-#s of Cows, Fish, Cattedogs and Kids! (CFCDK!) games delivered* [Goal: <u>deliver game at 10-15 venues, for a total of up to 40 times annually</u>]</p> | <p>-Board and senior staff hold shared strategic discussion and assign contact plan to present to other organisations*</p> <p>-compare website analytics annually, comparing old to new site as well as new site, going forward*</p> <p>-record number of notable content-updates on website*</p> <p>-staff generate Twitter &amp; Facebook summaries [Existing Req'd]*</p> <p>-extension tracking file (staff) [Existing Req'd]*</p> <p>-staff use Google Analytics [Existing Req'd]*</p> |  |
| <p><b>Land managers and users understand their role and impact on riparian health</b></p> | <p>-via poll or program evaluation, can participants suggest mgmt. changes? [Goal: <u>implement annual poll or survey in 2017-18</u>]</p> <p>-# people that heard particular presentation*</p> <p>-# copies of extension materials requested, by category*</p>   | <p>-women's grazing school attendee survey; stockman's course results [Existing Req'd]* [Goal <u>75% indicate improved knowledge and intent to implement</u>]</p> <p>-new online poll (social media or</p>   | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |



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|  | <p><i>-strategy:</i> design/redesign so metrics can be captured, incl. ask people to categorise themselves when they download (eg. are you a student, rancher, general public, etc) to discern if they are a land manager or land user <u>[Goal: determine feasibility and implement 2017-18]</u></p> <p><i>-strategy:</i> on paper evaluations and feedback forms, ask what category of person they are (student, rancher, general public, etc) to discern if they are a land manager or land user <u>[Goal: implement 2017-18]</u></p> | <p>website based) to evaluate management knowledge and implementation of participants [including RHI report recipients]*</p> <p>-RES training session feedback forms [Existing Req'd]* <u>[Goal: 65% indicate improved knowledge or skills]</u></p> <p>-Beaver workshop feedback forms [Existing Req'd]* <u>[Goal: 65% indicate improved knowledge]</u></p> <p>-extension tracking file (staff) [Existing Req'd]*</p> <p>-complete RHI follow up phone calls to gather feedback on C&amp;F impacts as well as role of non-C&amp;F [partners, family, neighbours, etc.] in management change [Goal: 15-20/year]*</p> |  |
| <p><b>Land managers understand how Cows &amp; Fish measure and demonstrate riparian health</b></p> | <p>-# RHA field days &amp; attendance <u>[Goal: 5 d/yr, average 10/d]*</u></p> <p>-# RHI/A reports <u>[Goal: 120 sites reported on/yr]*</u></p> <p>-# of RH extension materials out in a yr, and cumulatively</p> <p>-# riparian health references in other peoples' documents</p>   | <p>-extension tracking file (staff) [Existing Req'd]*</p> <p>-internal tally of reports, currently being built*</p> <p>-member and Board input along with staff tally of</p>  | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |

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|  | <p>-# other groups using the method (might be stories/ anecdotes in part)</p>  | <p>RH use in non-C&amp;F work<br/>-potentially deliver survey to ask other groups if using RH methods</p>  |  |
| <p><b>Land managers learn skills to manage and measure health of riparian areas</b></p>  | <p>-# Riparian Health (RH) training sessions and feedback results [Goal: 75% indicate increased skills]<br/>-# RHA field days &amp; attendance [Goal: 5 d/yr, average 10/d]*<br/>-use of RH methods by other agencies &amp; organisations in core work<br/>-grazing schools results (what skills/knowledge learned to apply to mgmt) [Goal: 65% indicate increased skills related riparian health measurement or riparian management]*<br/>-sustainable beef metrics may be used to tell number of those using method, in future<br/>-# acres and agrologists (all Public Land) must be managed using RHA<br/><i>Strategy:</i> Survey Monkey or other online survey to training session attendees on if they've used our work or how much<br/>-[future] riparian health mgmt. changes<br/><i>Strategy:</i> all Public Lands agrologists are required to know how to do RHA's, and is taught at spring training</p> | <p>-extension tracking file (staff) [Existing Req'd]*<br/>-women's grazing school attendee surveys; stockman's course results or similar exit surveys [Existing Req'd]*<br/>-existing exit evaluation feedback forms from training sessions*<br/>-GoA reporting to C&amp;F on Public Land use of RH<br/><br/>-potentially deliver survey to ask other groups if using RH methods</p> | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |
| <p><b>General public, Land Users, and Youth gain an understanding and respect for riparian areas and riparian management</b></p> | <p>-# of people engaged in extension events; #factsheets, #website visits* [Goal 25,000 page views annually; increase mobile device use from 11%]<br/>-#using social media or responding to specific posts* [Goal: Facebook: increase in followers/yr; Twitter: increase in followers with average 2 links/ retweets or likes per day]</p>   | <p>-extension tracking file (staff) [Existing Req'd]*<br/>-website and social media metrics*<br/>-poll on Facebook/ Twitter</p>  | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |

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|  | <p>-# of post-secondary students/courses using Cows and Fish info or extension</p> <p><i>Strategy:</i> meet w/ instructors/profs to ensure update for post secondary users</p> <p><i>Strategy:</i> perhaps Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPACs) education/ school connections could develop useful metrics w/ our input</p> |  |   |
| <b>Intermediate Outcomes:</b>  |   |  |   |
| <b>Cows &amp; Fish demonstrate good governance through effective, efficient and transparent processes</b>  | <p>-List of governance and policies</p> <p><i>Strategy:</i></p> <p>-new annual report showing key metrics</p> <p>-also see Ultimate Outcomes</p>  | <p>-new list of governance items being needed and approach to make them*[Board &amp; Staff]</p>  |   |
| <b>Cows &amp; Fish is viewed as an essential and preferred service for knowledge transfer, motivating change, management and measuring riparian health</b> | <p>-Program evaluation results</p> <p>-poll asking for feedback on essential/preferred partner</p> <p>-number of partnerships in a given year, both new and total</p> <p>-also see Ultimate Outcomes</p>  | <p>-profile results of 2017 evaluation report*</p> <p>-staff tracking of all work via partners [currently most are listed by names in annual reporting]</p>  | See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data |
| <b>Land managers are using information provided by Cows &amp; Fish to demonstrate the health of their riparian areas</b>                                   | <p>-Program evaluation results</p> <p>-sustainable beef metrics may be used to tell number of those using method, in future</p>   | <p>-profile results of 2017 evaluation report*</p> <p>-poll asking for numbers of people using</p> <p>-complete RHI follow up phone calls to gather feedback on C&amp;F impacts as well as role of non-C&amp;F [partners, family, neighbours, etc.] in management change [Goal: 15-20/year]*</p> | See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data |

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| <p><b>Land managers and users are actively using the tools provided by Cows and Fish to manage riparian areas for health</b></p> | <p>-Growing Forward application/ acreage tracking of riparian projects<br/>         -# BMPs adopted<br/>         -#km or ha impacted by changes [selected funders]<br/>         -changes over time, being maintained or continuing to improve, and also reaching new areas [partially new]*<br/><br/>         -# hectares, km influenced, under X mgmt.[in part, only req'd for very limited funding]</p> | <p>-Program evaluation [new and existing]<br/>         -AB AF ESA tracking survey results*<br/>         -RH follow up results from revisits (health changes and management use)*<br/>         -# revisits for RH and change in health over time*<br/>         -some specific project BMP implementation site reporting (select funding)<br/>         -member reporting (eg. Growing Forward II/III) BMP applications)*</p> | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |
| <p><b>Land managers are recognized as effective stewards of riparian areas</b></p>   | <p>-Program evaluation results<br/>         -# Articles or online (blog, etc) pieces showcasing stewardship, by C&amp;F and partners<br/>         -use and share existing and build new stories (digital, presentation, print) showcase stewardship [Goal: 3 stories built annually – for presentations, digital story, print or other formats]*</p>  | <p>-# revisits for RH and change in health over time*<br/>         -# partner and member showcase &amp; reporting (eg. newsletters, articles)<br/>         -#nominations and awards received by landowners for riparian stewardship, who worked with C&amp;F or members<br/>         -#new profile and demonstration stories built*</p>  | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |
| <p><b>General public, Land Users, and Youth behave respectfully in riparian areas</b></p>  | <p>-Program evaluation results<br/>         -Reduced enforcement issues related</p>   | <p>-# revisits for RH and change in health over time*<br/>         -anecdotal stories showcasing change or respectful use</p>  | <p>See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data</p> |

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|   |  | -partner reporting (eg. use of off-highway vehicle bridges over streams)<br>-GoA reporting on enforcement effectiveness   |   |
| <b>Ultimate Outcomes:</b>   |  |   |   |
| <b>Sustainable Cows &amp; Fish Organization</b>   | -full complement of governance items for board and organisation<br>-Program evaluation results show C&F viewed as essential/preferred partner<br>-Funding shows increasing amounts of stable, multi-year availability* | -C&F Board and Organisation policies and procedures*<br>-Funding list and amounts summarised internally   | See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data |
| <b>Healthy well-managed riparian areas</b>  | -Riparian health is high or improving provincially, or improving at various other scales*  | -Cows and Fish Provincial (and other scales) RH reporting changes show improvements*<br>-provincial or large watershed mapping at large scale level by GoA or WPACs | See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data |
| <b>Land managers and users effectively manage for healthy functional riparian areas for all</b> | -Program evaluation results [new and existing]   | -# revisits for RH and change in health over time as well as management implemented*  | See 2016-17 Annual Report for existing data |
| <b>Albertans expect stewardship of riparian areas</b>   | -Attitude results indicate expectation   | -Research by academics, province or C&F – online survey perhaps   |   |