



Cows and Fish Report

**Evaluation Report of the Cows and Fish
Community Riparian Health Assessment Process**

Cows and Fish

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Program Report No. 014

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About Cows and Fish

Riparian areas are those areas along rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, springs, and ponds that are strongly influenced by water and are recognized by water-loving vegetation. Cows and Fish is striving to foster a better understanding of how riparian areas function and how improvements in management strategies in riparian areas can enhance landscape health and productivity for the benefit of livestock producers, their communities and others who value these landscapes.

Cows and Fish Partners: Producers and community groups, Alberta Beef Producers, Trout Unlimited Canada, Canadian Cattlemen's Association, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development, Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, Alberta Environment, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, Alberta Conservation Association

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Working with producers and communities on riparian awareness

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OVERVIEW

The evaluation of the Cows and Fish Community Riparian Health Assessment (RHA) process focused primarily on the effectiveness of two tools, the Landowner Report and the Community Report, provided to individuals and groups who participated in that process during 1999 and 2000. The objective in examining the RHA tools, and these two in particular, was to gain a greater understanding of the role they have played in raising riparian awareness and encouraging proper riparian management and, in so doing, to provide some background to Cows and Fish as to whether the efforts involved in producing the reports are worthwhile. Other RHA tools such as Start-up Meetings and Crew Contact were given secondary attention in this evaluation.

The evaluation addressed six assessment project areas (portions of rivers or streams for which assessments were prepared) in southern Alberta. There were 37 participants in the evaluation, comprising landowners and government land managers (referred to collectively in this evaluation as landowners), community group representatives, municipal representatives such as agricultural fieldmen, and municipal councillors. Twenty-nine (78%) of the 37 participants were landowners or community group representatives (most of whom were also landowners), representing 15% of the 198 Landowner Reports prepared by Cows and Fish in 1999 and 2000. Supplementary evaluation data were obtained from 26 mail-in evaluation forms sent to report recipients as part of their assessment report package.

The Landowner Report

Twenty-two landowners participated in personal interviews that focused on the Landowner Report. **Landowners could be categorized into two distinct groups in terms on the report's impact on their riparian awareness and likelihood of taking riparian management action, based on the understanding they expressed about the purpose of the report and of the detailed assessment results it contained.** Those individuals who had prior experience or involvement with other Cows and Fish riparian health assessment tools, or who had been actively involved in dealing with riparian management issues in their community, exhibited a far greater understanding of the intent and specific components of the assessment than did those with limited or no experience in awareness activities. For example, the importance of documenting benchmark monitoring data for future use, and of providing a mechanism to identify specific parameters of riparian function that may require management attention, was notably more appreciated by those

who had a foundation in riparian awareness, for example through participation in Field Days and Start-Up Meetings.

Conversely, and apparent among interviewees almost on a sliding scale, those with less and less participation in Cows and Fish awareness tools struggled to grasp what the Landowner Report was attempting to explain or how it might be used by them to assist in their riparian management. In most cases, these individuals neither read nor understood the content provided on, for example, the Score Sheet and, accordingly, did not relate it to management.

This variation in Landowner Report impact clearly reinforces the need to ensure that, before participating in a health assessment, all participants should have the opportunity to develop an understanding of the different components of riparian ecological function. That knowledge has apparently enabled those with greater participation in awareness activities to use the assessment information as a stepping-stone to improved management.

In quantitative terms, the Landowner Report increased by 9% landowner awareness about the need for action to improve the health of their own riparian areas. Sixteen (72%)¹ of the 22 landowners interviewed stated that before reading their report they believed their riparian areas *needed some improvement or a lot of improvement*, while 18 (81%) stated that, after reading their report, they believed their riparian areas *needed some improvement or a lot of improvement*. While this increment of 9% may appear minimal, the increase does represent a positive contribution when interpreted (as it must be) in the context of a number of practical factors. First, no pre-evaluation benchmark measure of awareness or knowledge was available to add greater comparative robustness to the responses of evaluation participants interviewed some months or years after receipt of their reports. Second, the Landowner Report is not a stand-alone awareness tool; rather, it is one of many Cows and Fish tools that are intended to work collectively to build each individual's awareness in an additive manner. Third, it is not a tool that is designed primarily to build generalized knowledge about riparian function; rather, it is a document designed to report and summarize field data collected for a specific site for the purpose of focusing management action on the site assessed. Fourth, not all the polygons assessed for the landowners interviewed in this evaluation required major improvement, and so not all interviewees were expected to indicate that their own riparian areas needed improvement. **Therefore, it is important (a) to realize that a 9% increase in awareness arising from a tool of this type represents a positive contribution by the report in helping landowners to understand and act on riparian health, and (b) to**

¹ Some rounding distortion occurs in the categorical data presented in this report due to the small number of participants.

remember that the majority of interviewees acknowledged that they were aware that some landscape improvement was required.

Interviewees indicated that the general presentation of the Landowner Report was very professional and that its content was credible and balanced. The topics identified as being most valuable to readers were those relating to vegetation (for example, species diversity, weed identification, and the way in which the plant inventory could illustrate native habitat or its potential), as well as the Air Photo and polygon photographs. These pieces of the report helped readers to relate both the current and potential condition of the polygons assessed to what they see on the ground. Among those readers who exhibited a good understanding of the purpose and intent of health monitoring, the Score Sheet and related management discussion provided value to them by identifying existing problems, explaining how and why areas had been utilized and/or damaged, and helping them to start thinking about how problems could be acted upon.

Regardless of how well a landowner was able to interpret the assessment provided in the Landowner Report, it was evident that all the pieces of information necessary to do so were present in the report. However, the placement of those pieces within the report caused readers some difficulty. For example, because the reader needed to interpret several pieces of information (for example, the Score Sheet, the Plant List and the Air Photo) in order to understand the polygon management discussion provided in the report's *What We Found* section, the current placement of those details in the appendix proved cumbersome and confusing to readers. Therefore, modification to the structure of the report is recommended in order to group and link together relevant assessment detail within the body of the report as much as possible, rather than splitting it between the body and appendix. Specific steps to achieve this restructuring are provided in this evaluation report.

While readers of the Landowner Report indicated that almost all of the information provided was relevant, useful and interesting, several indicated that they experienced a sense of information overload and/or discomfort with some terminology. The report content can be made to seem more accessible to readers by adopting a variety of simple strategies, such as including an Executive Summary; defining certain terminology (for example, hydrology, incisement) -- as one landowner suggested, "in layman's terms"; ensuring parallel use of terminology throughout the report; labeling report features more clearly; and adding visual interest to the report body by using a number of formatting techniques that leave the content intact but reduce the appearance of volume or density of information. A number of specific suggestions to achieve a greater sense of accessibility to report content are provided in this evaluation report.

Almost all readers of the Landowner Report indicated that they wanted further management information or direction, and cited Cows and Fish as an appropriate source. This suggests, first, that there is concern and commitment among landowners to take appropriate action on riparian issues. Second, with regard to where and how landowners wanted to obtain more information enabling them to move forward with appropriate management, generally those with greater individual experience with Cows and Fish awareness tools acknowledged that the Landowner Report was not the place to address specific management planning. Instead, they understood that the report's purpose was to document the assessment results. On the other hand, landowners who had less experience with Cows and Fish awareness tools looked to the Landowner Report as a source of information on specific management options. This apparent misinterpretation of the report's purpose was another indicator that lower awareness about ecological function was related to lower comprehension about the purpose of health assessment and its role in promoting management change.

Regardless of the level of participation in program tools, landowners indicated strongly that they looked to Cows and Fish for assistance in guiding future management action. The most preferred mechanisms to achieve this were stated as hands-on training (for example, at Field Days), personal follow-up telephone calls, or on-site visits from Cows and Fish staff to discuss assessment results and management options, as well as additional follow-up community meetings.

With regard to management action, 10 (45%) of interviewees indicated that their Landowner Report contained specific management recommendations. Nine (41%) indicated it did not, while three (14%) did not comment on this item.² Of the 10 interviewees who interpreted the report as a source of specific management recommendations, two (n=10, 20%) indicated it was very unlikely they would implement the ideas, while eight (n=10, 80%) indicated they had or would be taking action on the ideas provided. Three of these (n=8, 37%) indicated the ideas were *already implemented*, and five (n=8, 63%) indicated it was *very likely* or *somewhat likely* that they would implement the ideas. All of the individuals in this latter category indicated that implementation was planned within three to five years. Therefore, the majority (80%) of those readers who viewed the report as providing a source of specific management action information have acted or will act on that information, suggesting that it can play a helpful role in directing landowners toward making management changes designed to improve riparian health. Of those nine interviewees (41%) who

² Interviewees were asked to comment on the likelihood and timing of any anticipated management action only if they indicated that they believed management recommendations had been provided in their report. Interviewees were not questioned about the specific actions they may have been contemplating because this detail fell outside the scope of the evaluation. Accordingly, it is not possible to describe or explain any relationship between Landowner Report impact and specific management action that may or may not have resulted as a result of receiving a Landowner Report.

realized that the report's purpose was not primarily to provide specific management direction, a number mentioned indirectly that it gave them the basis to put their current management in a broader context and got them thinking about potential strategies. This suggests that the Landowner Report is also playing a worthwhile role in the additive process of developing awareness over time.

Reasons for not implementing included (1) cost and (2) perceived lack of available space for the number of head required to be carried on the property. One individual also indicated that "nature was the healer" through cleansing processes such as flooding rather than through making active management an operational priority. Factors affecting the implementation timeline of three to five years ranged from the need for sufficient time to review, plan and implement changes; the practicalities of accessing available budget; the need to obtain additional information to gain a more comprehensive picture of the whole riparian area on a given property; and uncertainty about the impacts of urban encroachment.

The Community Report

Discussions with municipal and community group representatives about the Community Report suggested that, by documenting benchmark data and issues, the report had the potential to benefit them in two ways. First, it can help motivate individuals to change management practices and, second, it can help the community group to address broader landscape management issues that affect the health of their watershed. In one project area, for example, it was reported that the availability of benchmark data and the flagging of major problems had motivated individual landowners to adapt their own management practices (for example, by balancing utilization of pastures by integrating use of uplands with lower slopes and riparian zones). By understanding the overall health of their river, the report also assisted that project area group to more effectively participate in planning processes addressing broader land use issues such as industrial and infrastructure development, and water quality, because they had objective, reliable and thorough data about their riparian health.

All but one project area indicated that the report was well worth the community's financial and time investment in it. In that exception, motivation and participation had declined due to perceived misunderstanding about the objective of RHA (based primarily on the anticipation of financial support to proceed directly to remedial management action). **Open and ongoing communication about roles, expectations and potential resource limitations is required throughout the RHA**

process to prevent any misconceptions that may arise and that may lead to confusion or loss of motivation at the community level.

Generally speaking, the Community Report was viewed as reliable and thorough. It was considered to be valuable because it explained the different components of the assessment well, identified issues to be addressed, and was easy to interpret. Typically, the recipients of the Community Report were more comfortable in dealing with technical data and language, and with the volume of information provided, than were readers of the Landowner Report. Accordingly, the Community Report should continue to be produced. Minor modifications to structure and content have been suggested. Some presentation and stylistic adjustments similar to those outlined for the Landowner Report are also required.

Other Tools

The Start-Up Meeting is a fundamentally necessary component in the RHA process because it explains the process, provides personal access to program staff (whose role was seen as extremely professional, knowledgeable and positive), and provides the opportunity to allay individual fears about confidentiality issues. It is important to ensure that sufficient program staffing is in place to follow-through and build on motivation developed as a result of the relationship established with the community at the Start-up Meeting.

The potential value of the Follow-up Meeting was recognized because it provides the forum for community members to learn about the overall health of their project area, deal with sensitivities arising from their assessments, and clarify strategies for moving ahead on other awareness or management strategies. However, the impact of the Follow-up Meeting (including distribution of the Community Highlights document) declines noticeably when, despite apparently reasonable efforts on the part of Cows and Fish, the timing, communication and follow-up on meetings is interpreted in the community as inappropriate or insufficient, resulting in poor attendance and loss of motivation on the part of community members. Reasons for this may be, simply, administrative or, more generally, process-oriented. For example, **Cows and Fish may wish to take a more pro-active role in articulating roles and responsibilities, and in ensuring that RHA participants receive timely communications about the status of their assessments and about upcoming meetings, rather than relying entirely on community group or municipal representatives. More generally, Cows and Fish may wish to consider the appropriateness of devoting RHA resources to communities where local leadership and commitment is inconsistent or weak.** This may be the case, for example, where the process is

being driven by municipal agencies without Cows and Fish first being given the opportunity to develop fundamental riparian knowledge among individuals in that community -- on whose properties assessments are then prepared, and who will be ultimately responsible for land management decisions.

Feedback from evaluation participants on the Field Crew was consistently positive. They were found to be conscientious, professional and helpful. In addition to comments about the field crew specifically, the value of personal interaction between program staff and landowners in developing knowledge and motivating riparian management action was repeatedly illustrated in this evaluation by participant comments about the significant contributions made Greg Hale and Michael Gerrard. Many participants related how any information they received (whether at meetings or in reports) was always made more relevant to their local situation when "you can walk the stream with [Cows and Fish]" or "sit down and talk it through".

Summary

The Landowner Report has fulfilled its primarily role of documenting assessment results, contributed to a reasonable degree (for a tool of this type) to riparian awareness and action, and, generally speaking, has provided a reliable and worthwhile tool to landowners. It is a necessary and important part of the RHA process. However, it should be recognized that its value is maximized when it is provided in conjunction with awareness activities that build a foundation of riparian knowledge that helps landowners interpret and use the assessment results. As one landowner indicated, the Landowner Report is "part of the process [but the] real process is awareness through information sessions that lead to commitment". Accordingly, Cows and Fish efforts should continue to ensure that the foundation of riparian awareness is provided to interested communities.

The Community Report has provided the documentation summary required by community group representatives and municipal representatives to understand the overall health of their project areas, to assist individuals to move toward changes in management practices, and to help representatives to participate in a more strategic, informed manner in community-based action on local riparian issues.

Accordingly, it is recommended that both of these tools continue to be produced by Cows and Fish, with the modifications suggested to address the gaps identified by evaluation participants. In this way, these tools should enhance and round-out the RHA process. The role

played by each of these tools must be understood in the context of the longer-term objective of the Cows and Fish process. No single tool will provide the complete answer to creating awareness or ensuring appropriate management action. Each tool contributes in an additive sense to each individual's understanding of riparian management.

The strongest theme arising in the evaluation was that participants indicated a need for Cows and Fish to be consistent in following through to assist communities and individuals to move ahead with action, once awareness has been raised and commitment from communities has been received. While the mandate identified in the Cows and Fish process anticipates that management action following from awareness activities will be community-based rather than program-driven, it is clear that there is a degree of expectation at the local level for continued involvement of Cows and Fish. This suggests that the program's mandate may require review and clarification if existing efforts devoted to developing riparian awareness are to translate into action on riparian issues, while keeping in mind the core community-based values of the program. The degree and nature of any potential Cows and Fish involvement in further promotion of management action at the local level will be unique and will vary between communities. However, community members stated in this evaluation that they continue to look to Cows and Fish to provide leadership for RHA co-ordination when it is not sufficiently developed at the local level, and to provide as many opportunities as possible for personalized follow-up management learning opportunities with landowners. The goal of this desired involvement was stated as maintaining motivation and interest on the part of landowners by more pro-actively leading the interaction (where appropriate and agreed upon), discussing assessment results, and discussing specific management options with them. Participants indicated that this could be best achieved through, for example, additional community meetings geared to the various awareness levels of landowners, and field days and on-site visits that provide opportunities to experience, discuss and visualize riparian ecology concepts and management options.

1. EVALUATION PURPOSE

There were two objectives in evaluating the Cows and Fish riparian health assessment process (RHA). First, to support the Cows and Fish program's goal of developing public awareness about riparian health and management, the evaluation was targeted at understanding whether the various RHA components, or tools, assisted the public in developing that awareness and promoting the desired sustainable management action presumed to follow from awareness. Second, the evaluation was intended to articulate ways in which community members who participated in RHA believed Cows and Fish should adjust the RHA tools to maximize tool effectiveness in assisting communities to improve riparian health and management. In making any suggested modifications to the tools that are aimed at promoting awareness and action through tool improvement, Cows and Fish will also increase its own operational efficiency and resource expenditure in relation to meeting its awareness goals.

The first tool was the Landowner Report. These reports were written for individual landowners or for government land managers on whose landholding (or site for which they were responsible) a field inventory was conducted by Cows and Fish for the purpose of preparing an individualized riparian health assessment. The second tool examined was the Community Report, in which the data for all sites assessed within a project area were summarized for use by the municipal/county representative(s) or the local community group leader(s). A project area was defined simply as that stretch of river or stream that included the sites assessed.

The evaluation examined the RHA tools listed below.

- ◆ Landowner Report
- ◆ Community Report
- ◆ Community Highlights
- ◆ Start-up Meeting
- ◆ Follow-up Meeting
- ◆ Crew Contact
- ◆ Field Day

Greatest emphasis was placed on evaluating two of these seven tools, namely the Landowner Report and the Community Report, while fewer data were collected and analyzed for the remaining five tools. The following aspects of RHA tool effectiveness are addressed in this evaluation, some to greater or lesser degrees depending on the tool.

Interviewee Involvement and Motivation - *to what extent did individuals participate in tools; what motivated participation?*

Presentation and Delivery - *how easy or difficult were the tools to read and understand in terms of presentation/volume; was timing appropriate?*

Features and Content - *how did individuals respond to the content of tools; what did they learn and how well did they understand and relate the assessment results to their management action; how does content/presentation need to be modified?*

Awareness and Action - *in what ways did tools promote awareness?*

The RHA Process - *what do communities members feel that Cows and Fish did well; where do future awareness efforts need to be directed?*

2. SCOPE AND METHODS

The primary focus of the evaluation was on RHA project areas located along six river/stream systems in southern Alberta. These included the Highwood River and the upper Little Bow River (RHA conducted in 1999) and Drywood Creek, the Elbow River and its tributaries, the lower Little Bow River and Nose/West Nose Creeks (RHA conducted in 2000). The RHA carried out on the Highwood, Drywood, Nose/West Nose and selected reaches of the Elbow and its tributaries were conducted by Cows and Fish through liaison with local municipal district or county agricultural service boards. The RHA in the other project areas addressed in this evaluation were conducted by Cows and Fish in liaison with local community groups, namely the Upper Little Bow Water Users Association, Little Bow Ranchers and (for different reaches of the Elbow River and its tributaries than those included in the municipally-led project area) the Farmers of the Elbow Watershed (FEW).

The secondary focus of the evaluation was placed on project areas located on a small number of other systems (Chaffen Creek, Crowfoot Creek, Milk River and Mosquito Creek) selected either for evaluation pre-testing purposes, or to incorporate particular individuals identified by Cows and Fish who were not located in the project areas of primary focus. Where appropriate, this evaluation report includes the pre-testing data collected from the systems of secondary focus, due to the

constructive contributions made by those interviewees and because the main data collection procedures remained essentially unchanged from those used during pre-testing. Data for these four systems was combined and reported here under the name of Miscellaneous Creek.

The data collected in this evaluation were gathered directly from 37 individuals who had participated in the RHA in the stated project areas. Evaluation participants fell into three categories. The categories included landowners (primarily cattle producers but also including some government agency land managers), community group representatives, and municipal government representatives (agricultural fieldmen, agricultural service board members and/or elected councillors) directly or indirectly involved in the RHA projects. The number and category of interviewees are reported by project area in Table 1.

**TABLE 1
EVALUATION INTERVIEWEES BY PROJECT AREA**

	DRY- WOOD	ELBOW / TRIBS	HIGH- WOOD	LOWER LITTLE BOW	UPPER LITTLE BOW	NOSE / WEST NOSE	MISC	TOTAL
Landowners / managers	4	3	3+1 (Note 1)	3+1 (Note 1)	3+1 (Note 1)	3	3	22+3
Community group representatives	n/a	1	n/a	1	1	n/a	1	4
Municipal representatives	2	.5 (Note 2)	1	1	n/a	.5	1	6
Municipal councillors	0	.5 (Note 2)	1	0 (Note 3)	0 (Note 3)	.5 (Note 2)	0	2
TOTAL	6	5	6	6	5	4	5	37

Note 1 Three full in-person interviews, one brief telephone discussion

Note 2 Acting for both Elbow/Tributaries and Nose/West Nose Creeks

Note 3 Acting for both lower and upper Little Bow River project areas; did not return telephone calls requesting interview

In addition to the individuals interviewed, evaluation data was obtained from 26 mail-in evaluation forms included in the Landowner Report package provided.

The emphasis in the evaluation on the Landowner and Community Reports suggested that varying *degrees* of data detail should be collected about the RHA tools. The most detailed degree of data, pertaining to the Landowner Report, was collected from the majority (n=22) of the evaluation interviewees: those who were landowners or land managers on whose property an individual health assessment had been carried out as part of the RHA community process. Less detailed data was collected about the other RHA tools such as the Start-up Meeting and Community Highlights. In-person on-site interviews were conducted with these individuals by the evaluator,

who met with a minimum of three landowners/managers in each primary project area. Those individuals were selected arbitrarily from Cows and Fish records based on ease of contacting and meeting with them at their place of operation. A structured interview guide (Appendix A) was employed during the interviews, designed to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. These interviews also collected brief, additional data about all other RHA tools included in this evaluation with which the interviewees were familiar. Results are presented in Section 4 of this evaluation report.

A second, lower level of data detail was collected from those who were the primary recipients of the Community Reports, namely community group representatives and (where applicable) agricultural fieldmen/service board members (n=10). The Community Report data was collected using less-structured but broader-ranging personal on-site interviews, following the interview guide as a model but not limiting discussion to its content. Accordingly, the data collected from those interviews was entirely qualitative. Results are presented in Section 5 of this evaluation report.

The third and least level of detail was provided by qualitative data collected from brief telephone discussions held with municipal councillors (n=2) and with landowners who chose not to participate in on-site interviews but who offered viewpoints about RHA (n=3). The views of these individuals are incorporated where appropriate throughout this evaluation report.

The evaluation addressed seven RHA tools, as listed in Section 1 of this report. Note that, based on circumstances unique to each project area, not every tool was delivered in every project area, as set out in Table 2. In cases where tools were not delivered in a project area (as communicated by Cows and Fish managers to the evaluator at the commencement of the evaluation), they were excluded from analysis pertaining to that project area.

TABLE 2
RHA TOOLS DELIVERED BY PROJECT AREA

	DRY- WOOD	ELBOW / TRIBS (NON-FEW)	ELBOW / TRIBS (FEW)	HIGH- WOOD	LOWER LITTLE BOW	UPPER LITTLE BOW	NOSE/ WEST NOSE	MISC
Landowner Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Report	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Community Highlights	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Start-up Meeting	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Follow-up Meeting	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Crew Contact	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Field Day (Note 1)	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Varied

Note 1 Interviewees may have attended field days outside of their own project area and accordingly were queried about those experiences.

3. INVOLVEMENT AND MOTIVATION

This section summarizes the involvement with the tools delivered in the project areas as reported by the 22 landowners who participated in full interviews. It should be remembered, when considering this report, that a relatively small proportion of all RHA participants were interviewed; that they were not chosen on a statistically random basis; that their involvement with some tools may have occurred as long ago as two years (and hence are subject to less-than-accurate recall); and that circumstances surrounding the delivery of RHA in each of the project areas varied somewhat depending on local factors and available resources. Accordingly, the numerical data is not statistically representative of all RHA participants. Observations provided here are, however, placed within an informed context of qualitative data arising from structured discussion with interviewees. Further, in studies of this type, the use of more than five to six subjects (or, in this case, project areas) for analysis is sufficient to derive meaningful information without excessive duplication in the findings.

Among the 22 landowners with whom full interviews were conducted (hereinafter called the "interviewees"), 21 had received and read their Landowner Report prior to being contacted for interview purposes. In one case, the landowner had never received his report, likely due to loss in the mail. A duplicate copy was mailed and the landowner was interviewed at a later date after it

had been read. (One additional individual who agreed to be interviewed indicated upon arrival that he had not received their report; a duplicate was mailed but no follow-up interview was conducted due to time limits.) On this point, it was noted during the data collection process that a number of name and address errors occurred on Landowner Reports (primarily in 1999) which may have prevented receipt of reports by an unknown number of RHA participants. Due to greater staff resources devoted to report production and delivery in 2000, this administrative problem has likely decreased, but careful attention to this detail in the future is desirable to ensure resource-consumptive products reach their intended targets.

Only four (18%) of the 22 interviewees obtained a copy of the full Community Report prepared for their respective project areas, and usually did so because of their active involvement in the relevant community group, but only two of these landowners (9%) read it. This was a not unexpected result, because the Community Reports are generally intended for use at the municipal or community group leader level (see Section 5).

In those project areas in which Community Highlights were prepared by Cows and Fish (all project areas except the Elbow non-FEW group and the upper Little Bow River group), all landowners were given the opportunity to get a copy, usually through distribution at the Follow-up Meeting. However, only eight (44%), or less than one-half, of the 18 interviewees from those project areas reported that they had received a copy of the Highlights; only 5 of the 18, or less than one-third (28%), actually read the Highlights. Greatest degree of receipt of the Highlights occurred in:

- ◆ the Drywood Creek project area, where copies were provided at the Follow-up Meeting. However, only one individual reported that they had subsequently read it. Reasons stated for not reading the document included the interviewee's lack of personal commitment and time, and lack of motivation on their part deriving from what they perceived to be a lack of follow-up on the part of Cows and Fish to keep the RHA process rolling;
- ◆ the lower Little Bow River project area, where two of the three interviewees indicated they received the Highlights through the mail from Cows and Fish, but only one read it; and
- ◆ the Miscellaneous Creek project area, where two of the three interviewees received and also read the Highlights. It should be noted that both of those individuals reported a high level of involvement with several phases of the Cows and Fish process and played active roles in their respective riparian community groups.

Initial interest in the RHA was exhibited by good attendance of 16 (n=21, 76%) at the Start-up Meeting, particularly in the Drywood, upper Little Bow, Nose/West Nose and Miscellaneous project areas, which reported almost 100% attendance among landowner interviewees. However, both the Highwood project area and the community group-led project area on the Elbow River reported lower Start-up Meeting attendance, partly due to individuals being unaware of the meetings or not hearing about them in time to plan to attend. The motivation that was reported consistently by interviewees for attending the Start-up Meeting was that they were seeking ways to address the pressure they felt exerted on them by outside interests (such as urban political influences) about management of cattle and its relationship to water quality. Cows and Fish generally, and RHA specifically, was seen as “something to latch onto to get our house in order”, as well as a way to document riparian health now in time to stave off trouble in future years by obtaining baseline information showing that action had been taken by individuals to deal with any existing problems.

Attendance at the Follow-up Meeting was notably lower than at the Start-up Meeting, dropping to eight (n=18, 44%) overall. The exception was the Miscellaneous Creek project area where attendance remained at 100%. Again, the individuals interviewed for Miscellaneous Creek had been involved with the Cows and Fish process or had extensive professional interaction with program staff on numerous occasions and over a number of years, and this likely was a factor in them remaining committed through to this latter phase of the RHA process. The Highwood project area (a municipally-led initiative) reported no attendance from the landowners interviewed, at least one stating that they were unaware of the meeting. This information presents a conundrum because information provided by the municipal representative for that project area suggested that the Municipal District had been pro-active in writing letters to community members to advise about Cows and Fish activities. Low attendance among interviewees was also reported in the Elbow community group-driven project area, again primarily because individuals seemed unaware of the meeting. This may be no more than a reflection on the volunteer nature of these types of groups who cannot consistently manage ongoing contact with all their members due to limited personnel resources. In the Drywood Creek project area, two of the four interviewees attended the Follow-up Meeting, although overall attendance at this meeting was low, with less than half of the project area's landowners attending.

Reasons provided by landowners that motivated attendance at the Follow-up Meeting included an interest in obtaining clarification on their own assessment, comparing their assessment to others in the project area, and a basic concern about the condition of their land -- “it's my land, so it's my issue”. One individual, who had limited involvement with other RHA tools, attended for the purpose of “telling Cows and Fish off” for presuming to indicate in his Landowner Report what he was doing

wrong (although his need to do so was eliminated once the Follow-up Meeting presentation had been given by Greg Hale). Conversely, one individual who had more extensive interaction with Cows and Fish and its staff attended because “the interest was already there” and Greg Hale “always found something positive to say”.

Twenty (91%) of interviewees reported that they had contact with the on-site Cows and Fish field crew performing the health assessments (the remaining two (9%) happened to be off-site on the day the assessment was carried out). Of those having contact, 17 (n=20, 85%) indicated that the amount of contact was *about right*, two (10%) indicated they were *not sure* whether the amount of contact with the crew was appropriate because they didn't have enough experience to make a judgment, and one (5%) indicated that there was *not enough* contact which limited his opportunities to learn more. Discussion pertaining to the motivating role played by Michael Gerrand and the field crew, as well as by Greg Hale, were consistently positive. The role of the field crew is described in more detail in Section 6.

For the remaining tools, involvement across project areas was fairly consistent. Based on information provided by Cows and Fish staff at the commencement of the evaluation, no Field Days had been held with the municipal or community groups dealt with in the project areas examined in the evaluation, but members of the Elbow River community group project area subsequently indicated to the evaluator that a Field Day had been held there. Further, four (18%) of interviewees reported that they had participated in Field Days held at other locations. These individuals were primarily government agency land managers whose interest in participating was motivated through their municipal or employment roles. Other reasons given for participating in Field Days included the opportunity to learn about other types of rivers/streams, either to obtain new information or to compare information that put their own management into context; to familiarize themselves with basic riparian ecology concepts such as stream mechanics; and to learn about the objectives and activities of Cows and Fish.

4. LANDOWNER REPORT

This section details the observations made by interviewees about presentation/readability of the Landowner Report as well as the perceived appropriateness and/or impact of the content provided in each of its sections. Unless stated otherwise, information was consistent (or at least not contradictory) across project areas (remember that the interviews were structured in such a way that individuals were not required to comment on questions relating to every report section).

Suggested modifications to the content and/or structure of each report section are provided for the purpose of increasing its overall effectiveness. Further, due to the nature of the questions, most of the data collected was qualitative in nature and

4.1 Presentation and Timing

With regard to the presentation of the Landowner Report, generally and without reference to the specific assessment results, both the volume of information and the ease of reading the report in its present format appeared to be appropriate. In terms of length and detail of the report, 19 (86%) of interviewees indicated that the Landowner Report had *about the right amount of information* (neither too much nor too little). Two (9%) felt that it had *too much information*, while one (5%) felt it had *not enough information*. In terms of general readability and ability to understand the report, 15 (68%) of the interviewees indicated that it was *easy to read and understand* (Drywood, Elbow, upper Little Bow, Nose and Miscellaneous project areas) and seven (32%) reported that they found it *moderately easy to read and understand* (including every participant in the lower Little Bow project area and the majority of participants in the Highwood project area, all of whom had limited involvement with other RHA tools). No-one indicated that the report was *difficult to read and understand*. However, in probing about specific aspects of the report content, slightly different viewpoints on this matter became apparent -- discussion on understanding specific report content is provided in Section 4.2.

In terms of the timeliness of receiving the Landowner Report, 17 (n=20, 85%) indicated that they were *very satisfied* or *somewhat satisfied* with the timeframe in which the report was provided to them. The *somewhat satisfied* responses were generally mitigated by comments indicating that the lengthy delivery time was understandable once they saw the detail and volume of information contained in the report. Three (15%) of interviewees, all located in the Highwood and Miscellaneous project areas, reported that they were *very unsatisfied* or *somewhat unsatisfied* with the timeliness of report delivery, based on receipt times of more than one year from the date of assessment.

The most desirable timeframe for delivery of the Landowner Report in any given year was consistently stated as the January-March period, generally a less busy time of year for agricultural producers when they have time to review and consider management issues identified in the report. A very small number suggested that the October-December period would be appropriate. Since the timing of the Landowner Report is tied to the timing of the Follow-up Meeting, refer also to the discussion about the Follow-up Meeting in Section 6.

4.2 Content and Features

FEATURES LIKED ABOUT THE REPORT AS A WHOLE

- ◆ The report was viewed in a positive manner by almost all interviewees, with comments ranging from “very professional” to “excellent” to “much as what was expected” to “a pretty damned good overview”. It met a commonly stated need of several interviewees to document their individual or community riparian situations, either for the purpose of providing a record to protect them against external influences that may force them into unknown future management action, and, to a lesser extent, as a way of focusing thoughts on proceeding toward management change on their own.
- ◆ Over half of the interviewees had no specific negative comments about the report as a whole, providing a further indication that it was generally well received.

Some Reader Observations - What They Liked and Learned

- ◆ Concise, readable, the report gave “a balanced presentation of issues”.
- ◆ Met the objective of documenting “where the riparian area [health] is now”; gave a feel for what problems were out there before acting; “it did what it said it was going to do”; refreshed the memory and focused interest on the situation.
- ◆ “Opened my eyes to stuff I hadn’t thought about, like messy crossings”; “I saw cattle were impacting and had to start thinking of options”; explained how overgrazing occurred through discussion of grazing/browsing.
- ◆ Increased understanding of different areas by describing each polygon separately; through comparison of polygons “understood why they had been utilized differently” or damaged to varying degrees.
- ◆ It’s all “valuable information” to “get awareness”.
- ◆ Started to think about options; understood that “now we need to move ahead from this introduction”.

FEATURES DISLIKED OR UNCLEAR ABOUT THE REPORT AS A WHOLE

While the majority of comments about the Landowner Report were favourable, the following observations are provided here for balance, and to highlight some areas of concern expressed by

interviewees. These areas of concern are described in greater detail in the following sections of this evaluation report.

- ◆ While the report provided a tangible document that helped individuals to think about moving ahead with action, it did not really provide specific detail on management options. This disappointment arose primarily with individuals who had less rather than more experience with Cows and Fish; their expectation was that the report's purpose was to provide individualized, specific direction on management action for their property (as opposed to a benchmark statement of riparian health).
- ◆ While the amount of detail in the report was considered both necessary and appropriate overall, the report did not include any type of introductory summary to enable the reader to get a snapshot of the health assessment that had been conducted on their property.
- ◆ Some interviewees (having limited direct involvement in awareness tools) explicitly stated, or it was observed by the evaluator during the interview, that they did not understand where RHA fit into the Cows and Fish awareness process or even what that process was. In particular, these individuals struggled to take any meaning from the scoring of the health parameters and relate it to the management discussion provided in the body of the report.
- ◆ When probed to greater depth about the volume of information, it was apparent that a number of readers became somewhat bogged down while working through the report, despite appreciating the value of the information provided. Structurally, the report was cumbersome because it required the reader to flip back and forth a lot in order to connect together the management discussion, the scores, the parameter definitions, the plant list and the photographs provided.

Some Reader Observations - What They Didn't Like

- ◆ A lot of information to take in; good to have the detail but it's a lot to read; information overload
- ◆ Didn't deal a lot with gaps in management; "I want more information about how to keep the cows out; where do I get it?"
- ◆ Ideas in the report were not seen as financially manageable or achievable due to perceived limitations of the landscape/topography or because of drought conditions.

- ♦ “What’s the goal here?”; “I didn’t understand what you were wanting me to do here”

SECTION: REPORT TITLE AREA

Few comments were made about this section, but the following observations can be offered. First, it is atypical to place the title section of any report, book or document after the table of contents. Second, the term *polygon* was unclear to many interviewees.

Suggested Modifications

1. The table of contents should be placed after the report title page, which should contain the report title and recipient/location information.
2. After the reference to the polygon number, add words similar to *See the section called What We Found for a definition of this term*. More discussion on this point is provided later in this section of the evaluation report.

SECTION: COWS AND FISH

Some comments were received that expressed concern or confusion about who Cows and Fish represents (“it’s a government organization, isn’t it?”) and about the report’s focus on grazing, in particular from interviewees whose primary interest was not agriculture.

Suggested Modifications

1. This section requires minor modification with regard to referencing to the new Facing the Issues fact sheet; and perhaps clarification on whether Appendix A is intended to (as it states) “provide more information” simply on Cows and Fish or to address broader riparian issues.
2. The word *partnership* is used a number of times in this section, yet only two partner organizations are mentioned. Consider mentioning them all.
3. The emphasis in the paragraph that is currently used is on *ranchers* and *riparian grazing*, but not all report recipients were (or will be) agricultural producers. Ensure wording reflects the

target audience of each report, or make it more generic and/or inclusive. Even if the emphasis remains on agriculture, consider using *producers* or *farmers and ranchers*.

SECTION: WHY A RIPARIAN HEALTH ASSESSMENT?

This report section elicited little detailed comment from interviewees but almost all agreed that its content and inclusion were “good” to “excellent”. Reasons offered were that the information was (a) required for completeness; (b) that it was helpful to explain what the objective of the assessment was to provide context; and (c) that a review of the assessment’s purpose was appropriate even if the target reader was already familiar with the information, for example, in the case of other family members who might read the report but who had not participated in other RHA tools. While a number of readers skimmed this report section because they were already familiar with its content, it was generally agreed that it was worthwhile to include it.

Suggested Modifications

1. Leave as is.

SECTION: WHY ARE HEALTHY RIPARIAN AREAS IMPORTANT?

Again (and as expected), few substantive comments were made about this section, but it was generally agreed that it was important to include it to set the stage for the report content and as a way of explaining that it is beneficial to conduct assessments repeatedly in future years. One individual (Nose/West Nose project area) felt that it was not of value to talk about fish habitat as a reason to conduct assessments in a stream system that had no fish. Note that the only involvement this individual had with Cows and Fish was that he had been contacted by Cows and Fish for permission to conduct an assessment on his property, indicating that the riparian information shared in various awareness tools seems to play a central role in the usefulness of the Landowner Report to a landowner.

Suggested Modifications

1. Leave as is.

SECTION: WHAT WE FOUND

Seventeen (77%) of the interviewees *agreed* with the health rating(s) reported, stating that the assessments had been objective and the scoring was much what they expected due to their familiarity with the situation within the particular polygons. Some interviewees expressed that they were initially surprised by score(s) being lower than expected, but that the reasons were clarified somewhat in the management discussion subsection. Four (18%) of interviewees indicated they were *not sure* whether they agreed with the assessment score(s), and one (5%) individual indicated that he *disagreed* with the score. Reasons for *not sure* and *disagree* responses related mostly to how vegetation type and vegetation utilization were accounted for in the assessment. For example, some individuals felt strongly that they had been penalized for the presence of what they considered to be beneficial species, for example, Russian olive and brome, or because they did not understand how the amount of browse had been calculated.

A very common observation about this report section related to the difficulty readers had in grasping the many different pieces of information provided in the report, that together were intended to explain the final health score, for example, the Score Sheet, the Polygon Photographs, the Parameter Glossary, the management discussion and so on. It is estimated that approximately one-half of interviewees commented on frustration and confusion in having to repeatedly flip back and forth through the report in an attempt to link all of its pieces to each other and to the health rating itself. **Further, it is estimated that approximately one-third of the interviewees required the evaluator to walk them through the different pieces, explain what they meant, and how they were related. Clearly, the level of understanding garnered from reading the report unaided was low in these cases.** This was particularly evident with individuals who had limited, or no, experience with RHA tools.

In cases where individuals indicated that they had had an opportunity to discuss or meet in person with Cows and Fish staff (primarily Greg Hale and Michael Gerrand), an appreciation of the report content and its relationship to potential management action was notably increased. This contact had usually occurred at the Follow-up Meeting or when the staff were on site with landowners.

There was a broad diversity of viewpoints expressed about whether this report section clearly communicated the reasons for certain types of impacts (for example, incisement, bare ground and so on), in particular where flood damage had been prevalent in recent years. Some interviewees were sensitive to feeling blamed for these types of factors that are outside their control, while others had a stronger sense that the intended purpose of the report was to provide benchmark

ecological status regardless of cause. Discussion on this topic with the evaluator, and the variation of opinion expressed, suggested that this is a sensitive area that may simply require the language used to be reviewed and reinforced.

Regardless of these drawbacks or whether they agreed with the health scores, 13 (59%) of interviewees indicated that they found the content of the management discussion section to be *very useful*, while seven (32%) indicated it was *moderately useful*. Two (9%) indicated that the content was *not useful*. Reasons for usefulness included that the discussion set out a clear, scientific picture of the polygon, and that benchmark data was provided. Usefulness declined because the information would “be better if presented in person.”

Concern was also expressed about being unable to understand some of the terminology used in the report, because the language was “technical” or “scientific”; many interviewees were simply unfamiliar with terms such as lotic, hydrology, incisement, lateral cutting, as well as several terms used on the Score Sheet. Lastly, while interviewees expressed little need for new or different topics to be covered, those that were mentioned related mostly to hydrology, with a few suggesting they would like to know more about what they called “stream mechanics”, and about slumping processes that occur in or near riparian areas.

Suggested Modifications

1. To address the concerns about information flow in the report, distinguish more clearly, in terms of information placement, between assessment detail and assessment supplementary information -- place all the primary pieces of information needed to understand the assessment results more closely together in the body of the report rather than splitting them between the body and the appendix.
 - ◆ First, explain the polygon(s) up front. Add a new introductory subsection called something like *Here's How Your Polygon Sites Were Determined* or *Here is a Description of the Sites that We Assessed on your Property*. Strengthen the impact of this subsection by incorporating both the selection procedure and the polygon size information (now somewhat lost in Appendix B). Don't assume readers know what the term *polygon* means: define it in some visually interesting way, for example, “What is a Polygon?” or “What Do We Mean by *Polygon*?” Consider using a small graphic here for illustrative purposes and to add visual interest.
 - ◆ Also, number the polygons starting with the first number at the upstream end to make referencing to the management discussion and Air Photo easier; the

reader tends to move downstream when visualizing their property, so use POL1 as the upper-most polygon number, proceeding downstream to POL2 and so on.

- ◆ Next, insert the Air Photo (this can be done by creating a blank page in the report body where the photo can be inserted during report compilation). These changes mean that the reader will now know what and where the subsequent management discussion refers to, and no longer needs to go to the report appendix for any polygon-specific detail. (This was a particularly evident requirement in the case of multiple polygons per report.) The appendix area will be reduced in size, and report production will be less cumbersome.
 - ◆ Express the polygon zone size in metres rather than as a proportion of a kilometre because it is easier to visualize and because these individuals are still most comfortable operating with the Imperial measurement system: “What’s .35 km look like?”
 - ◆ Third, incorporate the Score Sheet into the text body here, again for ease of reference and to set the stage for the management discussion that follows; this eliminates the current Appendix C and (hence) the information that it now duplicates. The most efficient way to embed the Score Sheet here is to utilize the MS Word table feature or MS Excel spreadsheet insert feature in the report template, and to simply retype the derived scores into the template (totals here can be calculated automatically).
 - ◆ Add some language here that guides the reader through interpretation. For example, “Before reading this section, you may find it helpful to refer to Appendix X (*How Assessment Parameter Scores are Calculated*) that explains how Cows and Fish determines scores in all assessments, and what score values mean. Then, return to this page to get a better idea of how the scores for the 13 parameters turned out in your own polygon(s).”
2. Due to sensitivity on the topic, review the report language that deals with ecological factors such as incisement, lateral cutting, bare ground and so on, that can be caused by either or both natural or human processes, to ensure that the site-specific cause is clearly defined and so that readers know that it is included for the purpose of providing a snapshot of health at a given point in time, regardless of cause. Make it abundantly clear the extent to which the score reflects a human cause or a natural process, and whether it is related to livestock or wildlife use.

3. When using terms such as hydrology, incisement and so on, consider providing a brief definition in parentheses (or, alternately, as a special feature on the page) so that the reader does not feel confused or overwhelmed by what is perceived to be scientific language, or does not have to flip to the Parameter Glossary provided in the appendix. A useful way to present definitions is to use a text box or call-out feature at the page margin, adding visual interest on the page and breaking up large bodies of text. Sample text for the term *hydrology* could be something like: "Hydrology is the science of how the Earth's water is exchanged through our land and air. It explains how water is cycled and stored, for example, aboveground in rain, snow and evaporation; underground in soil, water tables and aquifers; and in water bodies such as wetlands, streams, rivers, lakes and oceans."
4. The interest in developing more in-depth awareness about topics such as hydrology is probably best dealt with in the general awareness activities of the Cows and Fish process, for example, in presentations and booklets.
5. Many interviewees stressed that they feel increasingly limited in management options this year because of the current drought. In order that these circumstances can be taken into consideration in future when new assessments might be conducted and used for comparative purposes, consider adding minor climate data (for example, rainfall per year) in this section of the report to help place the current assessment in a broader context.
6. Use terminology consistently and concisely to reduce overload and confusion.
 - ◆ If the terminology used on the Score Sheet is, for example, *Disturbance-Caused Undesirable Herbaceous Species*, use this precise language in the management discussion (and even reference it with a parameter number to help the reader to link the score with the discussion).
 - ◆ In the first paragraph of this report section where the health category definition is provided, use *vegetation* not *plants* when referring to the relevant parameters because *vegetation* is used everywhere else.
 - ◆ In the short list that identifies the health categories and ranges, strengthen the impact here by emphasizing key words that are used throughout the remainder of the report, because this is the first time the reader sees them.
 - ◆ Add the words *Health Category* above the list of three categories.
 - ◆ Add the words *Score Range* above the list of three ranges.
 - ◆ Give the categories top billing by listing them in the first column because that's how the preceding sentence introduces them (i.e. use parallel structure to

- ease reading), and because the desired emphasis in the RHA process is on the category, not the score number.
- ◆ Examine why the term, for example, *Proper Functioning Condition* is included; there is no apparent reason in the current format for its use. For the purposes of the readers of these reports, it may be sufficient to use only one label category, for example, just say *Healthy*. Explain in layman's terms what the intended idea is, for example, "*Healthy* means that most or all of the ecological functions needed for a healthy riparian area are working in your polygon."
 - ◆ These suggestions also apply to the Score Sheet.

SECTION: NEXT STEPS

Discussion on this report section clearly indicated that landowners need further follow-up with Cows and Fish staff after receiving the report, in order to clarify and discuss its content and management implications. Requests for providing this follow-up ranged from holding one (or a number of) Follow-up Meetings, through to personal follow-up telephone calls, to on-site visits. Again, those individuals who had less experience with the RHA process tended to express the view that management suggestions should have been provided in their Landowner Report. Generally speaking, those with more involvement in the awareness tools, and in particular with the Start-up Meeting and Field Day, acknowledged that (a) the report was for documentation purposes; (b) it was important and sufficient to state the four generalized questions about management outlined in the present format; and (c) that management action requires additional, more individualized discussion. These views were illustrated, for example, by the following comment: "It was OK to have the general statements provided as is; the issues are complex and Cows and Fish was not asked to come up with a management plan."

Having said that, interviewees expressed uncertainty and frustration (and, hence, presumably a lowered motivation to take action) about where to find more information on topics of interest such as bank protection, manure management, plant identification and so on.

Suggested Modifications

1. Although a variety of viewpoints were expressed about what degree and type of management information detail was appropriate for this section of the Landowner Report, it was again evident that those with the greatest understanding of the intended purpose of the RHA (presumably through involvement with the Start-up Meeting and/on Field Day) were

comfortable with the current format. They appeared to understand that the report's purpose was to document benchmark/monitoring information. On the other hand, the desire expressed by those generally less familiar with RHA to have additional and/or more detailed management information is one that should be of concern to Cows and Fish. Given the resources devoted to producing each Landowner Report, such expectations could be tempered by ensuring that participants in the RHA have a more thorough grounding in riparian awareness generally, and in the complexity and purpose of RHA specifically, prior to participating.

- ◆ **Therefore, it is recommended that no substantive change be made to this report section in terms of its content or level of detail, but rather that a re-emphasis on developing prior awareness for landowners be considered. This may mean requiring a firm commitment from these individuals to participate in riparian awareness activities before Cows and Fish conducts a health assessment for them. Such activities might include at least the local Start-up Meeting and/or at least one Field Day that are designed to build the foundation of awareness that Cows and Fish promotes. Doing so should increase the likelihood that the report will give practical value to a landowner, and that the production resources devoted to the report are justified.**
 - ◆ Continue to provide opportunities for landowners to interact, preferably on-site or in sample field settings, with Cows and Fish staff to talk about specific management options based on assessment results.
2. Modify the way in which suggested goals are presented at the conclusion of this section by breaking specific points into more easily-read, manageable text, perhaps with the use of bullets or some other small graphic, and spacing the content in such a way that permits the reader to easily pinpoint main ideas. This is particularly important because the reader is approaching the end of the text body and may be experiencing fatigue, but the present formatting is cumbersome and cramped, as indicated below. The content here is critical and requires emphasis, but in its current format runs the risk of being skipped. Also, relate the content to the reader by personalizing the language (make the reader the subject by using words like "you" and "your").

The current format is:

Remember, the most influence landowners and their communities have on riparian health is how riparian plant communities are managed, and in particular grazed. Making a living off the landscape may not allow having all riparian areas on the operation rating at 90% (*healthy*). It is important to realise, however, that management goals should not allow existing health of any riparian areas to decline into lower categories, if possible. Realistic goals for recovering riparian areas target improving health into a higher category (e.g. *unhealthy* to *healthy but with problems*) or improving health within a category (e.g. 45% to 58% (*unhealthy*); or from 63% to 75% (*healthy but with problems*) in three years). Success at achieving improved riparian health depends on time, finances, commitment, proper planning/goal setting and, most importantly, patience.

Cows and Fish

*Landowner Report, Elbow River
March 2001*

3

For the latter portion of this text, try:

A realistic goal for improving your riparian area might include any one of the following:

- increase riparian health by moving into a higher health category, for example from *unhealthy* to *healthy but with problems*, OR
- within three years, improve the health rating within your current category, for example increasing from 45% to 58% if you're now in the *unhealthy* category, or from 63% to 75% if you're now in the *healthy but with problems* category.

Cows and Fish

*Landowner Report, Elbow River
March 2001*

3

SECTION: FACING THE ISSUES

Few comments were provided by landowner interviewees about this appendix. Generally, those interviewees who were already familiar with Cows and Fish tended to skim this material. Most agreed, however, that it was important and worthwhile to include it because it provided good background about the purpose and intent of Cows and Fish. A few interviewees indicated they felt it was entirely redundant. Nonetheless, there was an indication that this document identified that "there is work to be done". One individual (Drywood Creek project area) stated that he "felt they hadn't got to working with Cows and Fish yet, but [he] was looking forward to it". One individual

(Highwood River project area) indicated that while it was appropriate to list the partners, he was aware that neither the Alberta Cattle Commission nor Alberta Agriculture really had not promoted Cows and Fish and that their involvement was merely perception.

Suggested Modifications

1. The inclusion of this background information seems appropriate. It is presumed that the revised Facing the Issues fact sheet will be used in future reports. Rather than physically incorporating it as an appendix, however, it can simply be included as an enclosure in the report package and referred to in the body of the Landowner Report as “see the enclosed colour fact sheet called Facing the Issues”.

SECTION: AIR PHOTO

Interestingly, this appendix received a lot of commentary. While a small number of interviewees did not consider it valuable (or, in one case, found it was useful only for the purpose of helping to decide where to place irrigation pivots), many interviewees expressed that it was an extremely important feature of the report. Reasons included that it provided locational context; it helped to identify “bad spots”; it made it easier to understand vegetation density compared to what could be seen when walking the area on the ground; and, by providing perspective on distances and proximity of features, it gave a sense of “how much other space you have to work with” in order to distribute cattle or move other disturbances (for example, from recreation) away from the riparian zone. The Air Photo, therefore, appeared to be a very important step in helping the reader to start thinking about how management could be modified on a site-specific basis by visualizing both the broad spatial context as well as local topographical and vegetation features.

Suggested Modifications

1. As described above, move the Air Photo to the *What We Found* section.
2. Generally, this was considered to be an excellent feature of the report requiring minimal modification. However, some fine-tuning was suggested by interviewees, as follows.
 - ♦ Add a reference(s) on the Air Photo that relates to a number assigned to each Benchmark Photograph site (or any others provided in the report) so that the reader can more easily relate the ground features illustrated in the photographs to the spatial overview seen on the Air Photo.

- ◆ Where possible, or at least for non-agricultural readers who may not be on-site on a daily basis and who are not visually familiar with the polygon site, provide more detailed location identification (for example, GPS locations or even road names and/or legal land descriptors) to prevent confusion about site location, now and during future monitoring.

SECTION: SCORE SHEET

The Score Sheet engendered a surprisingly small amount of commentary in the interviews, given that its content is central to the actual assessment. There was an extremely clear distinction discernible by the evaluator about which interviewees understood the Score Sheet. The more experience the individual had with Cows and Fish, generally the more they understood the details of the Score Sheet, the purpose of health monitoring, and the report goal of providing benchmark data. In some cases, these were land managers who stated they had an educational background in, for example, botany, that made them more comfortable in interpreting technical information or terminology, and/or they had attended Field Days and/or had opportunities to speak individually with Cows and Fish staff. Benefits for these readers included that the Score Sheet helped to identify things that “need to be addressed” and “helped you zero in and see comparisons in the future”.

Clearly, these individuals saw the relevance of the Score Sheet information and grasped the purpose of health monitoring, but it is suggested here that the ability to understand the score parameters and calculation was closely tied to experiencing, visualizing or learning about those parameters in a field setting. For example, although one reader stated that he “understood the Score Sheet already, Cows and Fish must ensure a mandatory workshop first so you learn by touching”, while another indicated that to understand concepts such as *structurally altered*, “you need a hands-on approach to explain what this means”.

Even among those who expressed interest in or had a reasonable understanding of, for example, the parameter terminology, some still struggled with how to interpret the scores: “I was quite interested in the individual processes, I liked this part, but does zero out of three mean good or bad? It was confusing.” It was not apparent to this person that the answer to his question was available in the Parameter Glossary provided in the report.

It was evident that the Score Sheet, presumably central to the topic of assessment covered by the Landowner Report, had been skipped altogether by several interviewees, who had to be repeatedly

prompted by the evaluator to discuss it. Some of their comments are listed below: All of these individuals had virtually no direct involvement with the RHA tools.

- ◆ “I didn’t look too much at the Score Sheet but I could do something with it if you go through it with me.”
- ◆ “I hadn’t really looked at it; it would have been better if I’d got to a meeting.”
- ◆ “I didn’t understand how this was calculated, even though I read it three times.”

These readers clearly encountered unease or difficulty with either how to interpret the Score Sheet content or to understand its relevance to the report and to management. One of the purposes of the Score Sheet is presumed to focus the landowner’s thinking on those ecological parameters that may require management attention based on the assigned score(s). The limited attention paid by many readers to the Score Sheet therefore indicates a significant gap in the effectiveness of the Landowner Report in terms of how well readers have understood the fundamentals of riparian health assessment. As indicated elsewhere in this evaluation report, the evaluator was asked to explain both the Score Sheet parameters and their relationship to the Parameter Glossary and to the management discussion. A number of these interviewees then expressed that it was precisely this type of personal information exchange that they found most helpful in understanding riparian health and health monitoring (although it obviously would have had greater value coming from Cows and Fish staff more experienced in awareness initiatives).

Regardless of how well interviewees understood the Score Sheet, a consistent theme in their comments was that field experience and personal contact with program staff was (a) required to help them understand the information and (b) missing from their own experience with Cows and Fish. Clearly, this is an example of the need to ensure that members of the public gradually build awareness through various phases of the RHA process in order to take value from the Landowner Report.

Suggested Modifications

1. Move the Score Sheet into the body of the report, and modify it, as described above in the *What We Found* section.
2. Either remove the term *lotic* or define it.

3. Remove the reference *Derived from Lotic Inventory Form and Lotic Health Assessment (Stand-Alone)*. Its inclusion represents terminology overload and has no relevance to the reader.
4. Identify the Score Sheet contents more specifically by adding a column heading above the list of parameters (called *Parameters*), as well as a sub-heading for the two categories of Vegetation and Soil Parameters.
5. Place the category description at the top of the page; change the term *Descriptive Category* to *Health Category* because this is what is used elsewhere and what the reader should easily recognize and understand by this point in the document.
6. Increase the impact of this information by improving its visual presentation -- remove excess underlining and standardize the alignment.

- ◆ *Note: If all of the suggested modifications noted above are adopted, Appendices A, B and C of the existing report format will have been eliminated.*

SECTION: PARAMETER GLOSSARY

The views expressed about the Parameter Glossary generally indicated that, while it provided a lot of technical information, it was considered necessary as background information to the assessment score. While a number of interviewees did not look at it in detail (for reasons set out above) most, regardless of whether they understood it upon first reading the report or had to have it explained by the evaluator, indicated that it was necessary to review the content at least briefly prior to examining their Score Sheet(s) in any detail. Due to the length of the Parameter Glossary, however, it is likely best placed in the appendix.

Suggested Modifications

1. Refer to the third point under Suggested Modifications in the *What We Found* section above, to provide a stronger text reference directing the reader to the Parameter Glossary.
2. Reduce the formality of the title, from *Interpretation of Lotic Health Assessment Score Sheet and Parameters* to something like *How Assessment Parameter Scores are Calculated*.

3. Increase the value of the channel incisement figure by making direct reference in the *What We Found* section to the particular stage represented by the polygon being discussed, for example, “The score assigned for stream channel incisement in this polygon places your stream type in the Stage 4 category, as illustrated in Figure 1 of Appendix X). Reduce the perception of excessive technicality by using a simpler numbering scheme targeted to these readers, for example, Stage 1 through 7 or Stage A through G.
 - ◆ The final page of this appendix currently refers to Figure 3. Correct the numbering because there are no figures numbered as 1 or 2.
4. The length of this appendix could be reduced by eliminating references to species not found in Alberta, as one interviewee said: “Canadianize it!”
5. Incorporate the Parameter Glossary text file into the report template file to make report compilation more efficient. When doing so, make formatting consistent with report body.

SECTION: PLANT LIST

The plant list was the feature of the Landowner Report that was most frequently commented on, engendering a high degree of interest to almost all interviewees. Several commented that it was “excellent”; that they were “pleasantly surprised” by the number of species (particularly native), and that they appreciated that weed species were identified so that appropriate remedial action could be taken. In addition, the list served to illustrate for readers what native habitat “looks like” in terms of the potential species present, linking that to potentially increasing health: “it was extremely interesting to see six or seven types of willows, and down the road I would like to see more [willow] growth”. There was also an indication that readers wanted to better visualize these plants; somewhat curiously, the reading references provided in a subsequent appendix were not mentioned as addressing this need, even though a number of interviewees indicated that they would like to learn more about these plants by “pictures” or “in the field”.

Some concern was expressed about the interpretation of certain species currently classed as disturbance (for example, brome). One botany-trained interviewee identified what he felt were technical classification errors (these will be forwarded to Cows and Fish under separate cover for review purposes). Differences of opinion on plant classification played a large role in determining whether readers accepted the validity of the assessment score, with at least two stating this as the main reason for being unsure about the results provided in their Landowner Report.

Generally speaking, the format of the Plant List was considered suitable, although some suggested that it would be easier to read if sorted by common name rather than scientific name, or by plant status category rather than alphabetically (i.e. placing all native plants together, all disturbance plants together and so on; and in this way, plants that fall into more than one category would be shown twice).

Suggested Modifications

1. Generally speaking, this appendix was very effective because it provided the record necessary to raise awareness about plant diversity on a site-specific basis. It was generally considered to be presented in an easily understood format. No major modifications are suggested.
 - ◆ However, since there was no direct reference to this appendix in the report body itself, this oversight should be addressed.
2. Standardize references to this appendix. In the Table of Contents, it is now called *Riparian Plant List*. The appendix title is *Riparian Plant Information* and its sub-title is *Riparian Inventory Plant List*. Consider naming it what it is: *Your Riparian Plant Inventory*.
3. To reduce the possibility of reducing the credibility of an assessment, provide some emphasis in the text as to why a plant that may be subject to different interpretations is classified the way it is.

SECTION: REFERENCES

Virtually no reference was made to this appendix by interviewees. Even when prompted, little comment was offered. No-one indicated that they had used or acquired any of the documents listed. This seemed to reinforce that the desired learning format for landowners is one oriented to hands-on experiences rather than one involving more reading material.

Suggested Modifications

1. Consider eliminating this as an appendix, but mention in the report conclusion section that the information is available by contacting Cows and Fish directly. If retained, label it as "Readings" rather than "References" to clarify that the items are provided as potential resources for landowners rather than as supporting documentation for the information provided by Cows and Fish in the body of the report.

SECTION: POLYGON PHOTOGRAPHS

Generally speaking, the polygon photographs played an important role in encouraging producers to monitor their riparian areas, providing confirmation of what was seen and reported on in the assessment. Their value in the monitoring process was acknowledged: photographs were “useful in documenting the stream” and “encouraged the individual to take responsibility for documenting the stream in the future”. Even interviewees relatively unfamiliar with riparian ecology and other RHA tools found the photographs to be “very helpful” in starting to plan how the area might be managed differently. Having said that, there was a preference among those less familiar with the role of health monitoring for photographs that illustrated the problems identified in the assessment instead of benchmark views of “just water” at either end of the polygon.

1. Simplify and personalize the title of the appendix; just call it *Benchmark Photographs* instead of *Riparian Health Assessment Photographic Inventory-Photographic Benchmarks*.
2. Consider incorporating photographs that illustrate topics of concern addressed in the management discussion within the body of the report, in addition to the required benchmark images now provided in the appendix (similar to the way in which photographs are treated in the Community Report). Regardless of placement, always add detailed captions identifying what the photograph is intended to illustrate (for example, lateral cutting).
3. Clearly number the photographs and reference each number to the appropriate location on the Air Photo so as to more closely link these two pieces of information.

4.3 Awareness and Action

In quantitative terms, the Landowner Report increased awareness about the need for action to improve the health of landowners' own riparian areas by 9%. Sixteen (72%) of landowners interviewed stated that before reading their report they believed their riparian areas *needed some improvement* or *needed a lot of improvement*, while 3 (14%) were *unsure whether any improvement was needed* and 3 (14%) indicated *no improvement* was required. These figures compare to 18 (81%) interviewees who stated that, after reading their report, they believed their riparian areas *needed some improvement* or *needed a lot of improvement*, while only one (4%) was *unsure whether any improvement was needed* and three (14%) still believed *no improvement* was required.

While this increment of 9% may on its own appear to be insignificant, the increase does represent a positive contribution when interpreted (as it must be) in the context of a number of practical factors. First, no pre-evaluation benchmark measure of awareness or knowledge was available to add greater comparative robustness to the responses of participants interviewed some months or years after receipt of their reports. Second, the Landowner Report is not a stand-alone awareness tool; rather, it is one of many Cows and Fish tools that are intended to work collectively to build each individual's awareness in an additive manner. Third, it is not a tool that is designed primarily to build generalized knowledge about riparian function; rather, it is a document that reports and summarizes field data on a specific site for the purpose of focusing management action on only those site(s) assessed. Fourth, not all the polygons assessed for the landowners interviewed in this evaluation required major improvement, and so not all interviewees were expected to indicate that their own riparian areas needed improvement. Given these factors, it is important to realize that a 9% increase in awareness arising from a tool of this type represents a positive contribution, and to remember that the majority of interviewees acknowledged that they were aware that some landscape improvement was required.

With regard to management action, 10 (45%) interviewees indicated that their Landowner Report contained specific management recommendations. (Nine (41%) indicated it did not, while three (14%) did not comment on this item.)³ Of those 10 who interpreted the report as a source of specific management recommendations, two (n=10, 20%) indicated it was very unlikely they would implement the ideas, while eight (n=10, 80%) indicated they had or would be taking action on the ideas provided. Three of these (n=8, 37%) indicated the ideas were *already implemented*, and five (n=8, 63%) indicated it was *very likely* or *somewhat likely* that they would implement the ideas. All of the individuals in this latter category indicated that implementation was planned within three to five years. Reasons for not implementing included (1) cost and (2) perceived lack of available space for the number of head required to be carried on the property. One individual also indicated that "nature was the healer" through cleansing processes such as flooding rather than through making active management an operational priority. Factors affecting the implementation timeline of three to five years ranged from the need for sufficient time to review, plan and implement changes; the practicalities of accessing available budget; the need to obtain additional information to gain a more comprehensive picture of the whole riparian area on a given property, and uncertainty about the impacts of urban encroachment.

³ Interviewees were asked to comment on proposed action only if they indicated that management recommendations were provided in their report.

These figures suggest that the report content has the potential to assist landowners in understanding the complexity and importance of maintaining and monitoring riparian health. The most helpful feature of the Landowner Report that contributed to landowner awareness was the information on vegetation (appreciation of species diversity, the role of rootmass in streambank stability and how cattle impact it; and the identification of weed species that promoted action to deal with that problem). The provision of assessment baseline information for monitoring purposes was also valued for the way in which it confirmed beliefs about the specific riparian area and for formally documenting it, while the Air Photo played an important role in helping individuals to visualize their landscape and relate management action to it.

4.4 Mail-In Evaluations

The information provided on the 26 Landowner Report mail-in evaluation forms was consistent with feedback received from the 22 landowners who were interviewed in person. For example, all but one of mail-in respondents indicated that the Landowner Report was easy to understand. A request to include an Executive Summary and to provide photographs showing “the negative things so a person can compare with new pictures” were also made; this latter observation suggested that visual evidence contributed to reader understanding of the intent and purpose of health monitoring. Specific comments provided about the value of the report were that, as was the case with the in-person interviewees, it provided a baseline for monitoring and a confirmation of what they knew to be the situation on their property, for example, “This report gives me a level of where I am now and how I can improve that level -- a goal I want.”

The most commonly-identified helpful topic in the report identified in the mail-in evaluation forms related to vegetation (species diversity, distinguishing undesirable species, importance of rootmass, the impact of browsing and so on). Another common benefit of the report content related to potential action steps such as controlling cattle access by means of fencing, alternate water sources and grazing intensity. At least three individuals indicated that the value of the Landowner Report was that it provided their first real introduction to the “delicate nature” of riparian areas.

Comments from mail-in respondents also suggested that while the report content and style were generally considered appropriate, the report’s impact could be increased with a greater knowledge or awareness about RHA: “The report is not too technical but it does require a lot of background reading to educate me as to what constitutes an appraisal.” As with the in-person interviewees, mail-in respondents frequently commented on the need for more follow-up to enable them to obtain

information on various management options and to proceed to the next step of taking action, for example:

- ◆ “I would like an on-site discussion with you.”
- ◆ “Maybe some recommendations on what could be or should be done ASAP or how to get started to repair damage.”
- ◆ “We would like to have someone come and walk the creek with us and discuss possible repairs or creek management strategies.”
- ◆ “Must be more follow-up with all involved.”

In summary, the mail-in evaluation forms were consistent with information obtained in the in-person interviews in that the Landowner Report served a number of similar purposes. First, it provided the required benchmark confirmation about the individual’s situation, it provided discussion on important riparian ecology factors, in particular the role of vegetation; it provided a good introduction to riparian areas and monitoring for those who appeared to have little prior awareness (“We will be more careful as of this report.”; and it provided links to specific management options pertaining to controlling grazing impact. Conversely, its impact could be enhanced by ensuring that landowners have more knowledge about riparian ecology prior to participating in an assessment.

4.5 Summary

The Landowner Report appeared to make two contributions: overall, it documented, as expected, the results of the assessment procedure, and specific components such as the Plant List and the Air Photo helped landowners to start thinking about how to act on issues raised in the management discussion. It was agreed, primarily among those with greater prior experience with the RHA process, that the report met the objective of providing a benchmark for monitoring purposes and that it was not intended to offer a management plan. In addition, in about 20% of interviewees, the documented evidence provided in the report had been used directly to define, redirect or prevent planned disturbance activities on-site. The impact of the Landowner Report was significantly reduced among landowners whose individual experience with the RHA process was limited (for example, they had attended none or almost none of the available tools like the Start-up Meeting, the Follow-up Meeting, Field Days and so on). This was illustrated by comments from these individuals such as: “Those hummocks have always been here; they still look normal to me.”

Indeed, for a number of these readers, the Landowner Report was skimmed, filed and never used. There was no context in which monitoring could be fully understood -- the foundation of ecological

awareness that could otherwise give the assessment meaning was absent. In order to make participation in RHA worthwhile for landowners, and to ensure that the resources expended by Cows and Fish in conducting and reporting on assessments are used efficiently to meet its goal of building ecological awareness, RHA should not be the first step on the road of riparian awareness for any given individual.

Interviewees stated consistently that a deeper appreciation of the issues raised in their report was a necessary precursor to acting on them. Regardless of how much any individual indicated they had learned from the report, most interviewees agreed that this additional knowledge must come from opportunities to meet or discuss with Cows and Fish the management options available to them, including detailed information on how to implement any new management.

Desired types of contact were identified as including, for example, follow-up telephone calls to discuss report content; site visits to visualize and interpret assessment results and discuss management plans; additional community meetings providing opportunities for question-and-answer periods; and Field Days to help increase knowledge about vegetation, management options and assessment interpretation.

Report content was considered helpful and appropriate in style and volume. However, several fine-tuning modifications have been suggested here regarding placement of the various pieces of information that together are required to fully explain and interpret the assessment itself. These modifications should ease the reading process, and therefore maximize understanding of, the assessment results provided in the Landowner Report.

Suggested Modifications Not Covered Above in Report Section Discussion

1. Consider developing additional follow-up opportunities that allow personalized discussion about management planning. This could involve, at a minimum, a mandatory follow-up telephone call placed to the landowner subsequent to report mailing. Regular contact helps maintain landowner motivation and interest by keeping Cows and Fish “more in their face”
2. Include an Executive Summary that states the health scores(s), sets out the key management findings or issues pertaining to each polygon, and reinforces the Next Steps.

3. Put contact information at the beginning to make it easier for individuals to make the contact with Cows and Fish that they have stated is so important; this information is somewhere buried where it is currently presented (between the report body and the appendix area).
4. Take advantage of common presentation techniques to reduce the impression of information overload and the hesitation of some individuals to tackle what can be perceived to be large amounts of detail to be read, as follows.
 - ♦ Maximize white space on each page by including blank lines between paragraphs and using plentiful spacing when formatting page footers and margins.
 - ♦ Use more bullet markers.

5. COMMUNITY REPORT

The feedback on community reports was received primarily from in-person discussions with community group representatives, agricultural fieldman/agricultural service board members and municipal councillors. Accordingly, all of the data is qualitative in nature. Due to their more active roles in promoting good riparian management in their respective project areas, these discussions focused less on report design and content and more on how the RHA process had worked -- and where, from their perspectives, it should go. Section 5.1 summarizes the brief observations made about the design and use of the Community Report itself. Section 5.2 outlines the views expressed about the future of the RHA process.

5.1 Content Usefulness

The Community Report provided a general overview ("the big picture") that acted as a motivator and promoted understanding of riparian health throughout the project area. It flagged major problem areas and identified the underlying symptoms. Two immediate benefits of the information provided in the Community Report were apparent, especially in project areas where there was a strong local facilitator or group leader (for example, upper Little Bow and Nose/West Nose project areas). First, the resulting awareness among community members had led to individual landowners to review ranch/farm planning adjust their land use practices in a number of cases. Second, not only have "they educated themselves on land use" but the community group/members can now also "knowledgeably ask questions to react to other land use" issues. Specifically, the comprehensiveness of the documented results of the health assessments had been used to obtain technical support and funding assistance to help the community group actively address broader

riparian issues such as industrial and residential developments. The assessment results helped them to not only “understand the basics”, but provided valuable benchmark information that would help them “to tell the story of their river” during planning processes.

With the exception of the lower Little Bow River project area (where virtually no comment was offered on the specifics of the Community Report), almost all of those who discussed the Community Report volunteered that it “was well worth the [dollar] cost”.

Similarly, almost all project area representatives indicated that the narrative and visual components of the Community Report, especially in the *Management Discussion* section, were excellent. Set out below are some representative comments, presented in the approximate order of the report sections they pertain to.

- ◆ The introduction was appropriately “to the point”, but a definition of the term *polygon* was missing.
- ◆ In the *What We Found* section, several readers commented on typographical or mathematical errors in (or at least had difficulty in interpreting) the overall average score of polygons. The count and average figures provided for each of the three health categories was, however, helpful and sufficient.
- ◆ The manner of separating the management discussion content into subsections dealing with different aspects of the assessment (for example, *Non-Woody Riparian Plants*) eased interpretation of results and helped to identify what issues needed to be addressed. However, the linkage between riparian management (and ecology) and water quality was not addressed here; this was considered to be important in both rural and urban areas to communicate that numerous factors contribute to riparian health.
- ◆ The pie graphs captured the required main points, providing an easy-to-interpret summary of the health assessment categories.
- ◆ Response to the project area map was neutral: it gave a sufficient overview and it was felt that there was no requirement to provide anything more sophisticated. However, it was also felt that it may be misleading because it can suggest that continuous reaches of the river/stream had been assessed when only specific sites had actually been assessed.
- ◆ The Score Sheet was, for the most part, well understood, but was awkward to access due to its placement in the appendix.
- ◆ As with the Landowner Report, the Plant List was considered to be an “impressive” feature, illustrating actual and potential diversity. The extent of the Plant List also validated for

readers that Cows and Fish had in fact completed the detailed work they had undertaken to do in the assessments.

- ◆ The Facing the Issues appendix was considered to be of particular importance because it provided background information to other readers (such as municipal councillors) who might not otherwise have had access to this information about the purpose of Cows and Fish.

Less concern about the complexity and volume of information, as well as the use of scientific language or technical concepts, was expressed by the readers of the Community Reports than the readers of individual Landowner Reports. This was likely because the community group or municipal representatives were generally more active in and familiar with broader riparian issues and the language associated with them.

Overall, the content, volume and structure of the Community Report requires little modification: it appears to have been easily understood by the targeted readers, and has proved useful in raising awareness and promoting action. However, some adjustments should be considered, as set out below.

Suggested Modifications

1. As with the Landowner Report, define the term *polygon*.
2. At the beginning of the *What We Found* section, eliminate the reference to the overall average score for the polygons assessed: it is too difficult to interpret.
3. As with the Landowner Report, place the Score Sheet within the main body.
4. Make the parallel modifications to narrative and presentation suggested for the *What We Found* and *Management Discussion* sections identified in the Landowner Report section of this evaluation report.
5. Consider expanding the discussion to address other issues of interest, such as water quality, in order to place the assessment in the context of overall riparian management.
6. Be sure to use parallel terminology throughout the report, as suggested in the discussion on the Landowner Report.

7. Clarify the meaning of the term *constancy* on the Plant List.
8. On the map legend, eliminate the reference to *Study Area*; it does not appear to be used anywhere else. Use *Project Area*.
9. As indicated in the discussion about the Community Report, consider modifying the presentation of the health parameter bar chart in such a way that the parameters that fall into each health category are grouped, and then illustrated as three separate charts. Make the charts and their font sizes larger.

5.2 Views on the Future of the RHA Process

With the exceptions noted above, the Cows and Fish program and the concept of RHA were viewed in a highly favourable light. **The program was seen to be doing a “fantastic” and “important” job by facilitating better riparian management in partnership with community members.** The role of Cows and Fish was seen as filling the facilitation gap: “I hope we can keep you guys going. We must keep the river healthy, and I hope Cows and Fish can continue to help us because there’s nothing from the government right now.” While others correctly pointed out that municipalities had partnered on several awareness initiatives and management projects, the sentiment was consistent in terms of Cows and Fish providing a practical approach to riparian issues: “They’re sincere and for real and good to work with.”

The two municipal councillors interviewed in this evaluation strongly supported the Cows and Fish program and RHA process. They acknowledged that their respective councils viewed riparian management as an ongoing process, and that Cows and Fish was “a very positive thing in creating our awareness” about riparian areas and “making us aware of what we should be doing”. Both councillors had received encouraging feedback from constituents about the levels of awareness being created by Cows and Fish, and indicated that they were aware of a number of community members who had adopted improved riparian management techniques as a result of that awareness. It was important to the respective councils that action on riparian issues should occur through co-operating groups such as Cows and Fish. The value of obtaining benchmark riparian data through community group involvement in health assessment, enabling them to respond to concerns, was stressed. Events such as community meetings, attended by Cows and Fish, in which a variety of community members or interest groups learned about health assessment results in the project areas were seen as very important steps in pro-actively dealing with issues of concern. (Several

landowners also indicated that Cows and Fish should encourage the involvement of non-agricultural community members in their awareness initiatives.) The main concern expressed by councillors related to the limited degree to which the provincial government seemed to take advantage of Cows and Fish expertise to assist in water management planning.

The most common concern expressed by evaluation participants about RHA was the need for, and perceived lack of, follow-up by Cows and Fish with landowners once reports have been distributed. The requests for follow-up ranged from the need for clarification on assessment details (from those just starting to become aware of riparian issues and who were less familiar with awareness and monitoring) to more technical information on specific management options (from those who had already developed a good foundation in basic riparian ecology learned through prior Cows and Fish awareness tools or other knowledge).

This seems to reflect a specific expectation on the part of participants for Cows and Fish to pro-actively lead people past awareness and toward action. Despite best efforts by Cows and Fish staff to communicate their availability by encouraging, for example, telephone calls from RHA participants through provision of contact information in reports and at meetings, Cows and Fish has reported the conundrum that relatively few individuals have taken the personal steps to pursue that contact. This suggests that, in future, Cows and Fish may need to find ways to fine-tune its interaction with communities to bridge this apparent gap, keeping in mind the specific and unique requirements of each community being dealt with (i.e. levels of awareness and local initiative vary) while maintaining its mandate of promoting community-based action.

Bridging this gap might be achieved by pro-actively maintaining on-going involvement with community members after report distribution for the purposes of (a) filling the leadership role when local characteristics leave a gap in co-ordination of awareness initiatives; (b) building on any existing interest through regular contact at various stages in the RHA process to prevent loss of motivation to participate; (c) co-ordinating with agricultural fieldmen or community group representatives to obtain the funding that is required to proceed with riparian projects; and (d) providing opportunities for individuals to discuss assessment results and specific management options in person and/or in a field setting. As indicated, these latter interactions need to be tailored to the individual's (or group's) level of awareness -- a number of people have now developed a solid foundation in the basics of riparian ecology, and need detailed technical information, while others are just starting out to build their general awareness.

6. OTHER TOOLS

The following discussion incorporates viewpoints expressed by all 37 evaluation participants, except in cases where it is specified that observations are drawn from the interview group of 22 landowners.

6.1 Community Highlights

Very little information could be obtained about the Community Highlights document because relatively few interviewees read it, or read it in detail, as indicated in Section 2 of this evaluation report. This appeared to be as much a function of access to the document as to its content or potential to contribute to awareness. Those individuals who did comment on the Highlights indicated that it was a good thumbnail sketch that was moderately useful because it increased understanding of where their own property stood in context with the health of the rest of the project area.

Suggested Modifications

1. Continue to provide this document to landowners, but distribute it directly from Cows and Fish together with each individual's Landowner Report. See more discussion on this point below, under *Follow-up Meeting*.
2. As indicated in the discussion about the Community Report, consider modifying the presentation of the health parameter bar chart in such a way that the parameters that fall into each health category are grouped, and then illustrated as three separate charts. Make the charts and their font sizes larger.
3. Re-evaluate this tool once more landowners have had exposure to it.

6.2 Start-up Meeting

As indicated in Section 2, attendance at and interest in Start-up Meetings was generally strong. Concerns about government, media or other public access to assessment results was high prior to meetings being held, and indeed proved a motivation to attend. Evaluation participants consistently indicated that they were very pleased with the manner in which the confidentiality issue was handled at the meeting, that they received the needed reassurance and clarification about

confidential participation, and that both Greg Hale and Barry Adams were always professional, positive and inspirational about the value of the process. **The Start-up Meeting was reported by a number of evaluation participants to be one of the most important steps in RHA because it illustrated that there were tools available to help them; it introduced and explained the process, it “got you prepared for what’s coming” and it “sold” municipalities on involvement. A number of community group representatives indicated that attendance at the meeting was “critical”.** Of the 16 interviewees who attended a Start-up Meeting, 14 (n=16, 87%) responded to the question about how comfortable they were with the way in which the decision was made to go ahead with health assessments in their area. Thirteen of these (n=14, 93%) indicated they were *very comfortable* or *somewhat comfortable* with it, while only one (n=14, 7%) indicated they were *somewhat uncomfortable*.

One clear exception to the positive role or effectiveness of the Start-Up Meeting tool occurred in the lower Little Bow River project area. **The following comments should be considered in the context that they represent an exception (but an important one) to the generally positive viewpoints expressed indicated above about Cows and Fish involvement in the RHA process.** While all three landowners who were interviewed in the lower Little Bow River project area indicated they were initially *very comfortable* with the way in which the decision was made to go ahead with health assessments in their area, comments provided by one landowner (full interview), one landowner (telephone discussion), the community group representative and the agricultural fieldman suggested that either miscommunication or misinterpretation had led to serious disillusionment with Cows and Fish generally, and with RHA specifically. For example, one individual stated that at the meeting “their group was misinformed on exactly what was being done with this program”, indicating that they believed “there would be some sort of [financial] help if we needed to fence areas”. Having apparently been told that “we were on our own with that, that you guys had nothing to do with it... I’ve lost interest in it... exactly what were you expecting... are you expecting us all to put money out of pocket to make this project work?” The community representative indicated that community involvement had been “a waste of time” as well as a waste of Cows and Fish effort because there were “no dollars” to proceed. Since “everyone benefits from a better river”, local individuals “should not have been expected to pay” for river improvements.

The community representative stressed, however, that it wasn’t anything Cows and Fish did or said that had created these viewpoints. Rather, it was more that they began with the expectation that there would be money available to them if they carried through with the process, and that interest “would stop dead” without funds. This type of outcome may arise simply due to limited opportunities to communicate or articulate all aspects of the RHA process.

Therefore, while interest in improving riparian health was initially evident in the lower Little Bow River project area, motivation declined quickly when the group felt they were unable to proceed quickly to implement remedial action. This feeling tied in with a second aspect of their frustration, namely that the Cows and Fish approach was not seen by them to be relevant to the uniqueness of their local landscape: "it's not like recovery in the foothills of two or three years, this is completely different --- to do a demonstration site [here] is a waste of time; we won't see willows here for 50 years". Members of this project area, therefore, were interested in immediate action -- they did not see Cows and Fish involvement as a learning process. This represents something of a Catch-22 situation, but it speaks to the importance of continuing to clearly identify, understand and clarify locally-specific concerns, expectations and resources through on-going interaction and awareness-building.

In addition, the lower Little Bow River project area agricultural fieldman stressed that, in his view, Cows and Fish had failed to keep the county advised of program activities or to provide periodic status reports (while also acknowledging that he could have been more pro-active in this communication). It was stressed that the lack of the desired follow-through on the part of Cows and Fish occurred because the program seemed to have made heavy commitments based on its popularity across the province, without having sufficient staff resources in place to ensure that all the phases of the Cows and Fish process could be completed in each of those areas in a timely fashion. It was indicated that the level of disenchantment in this project area extended to the County Council and was serious enough that the County would not participate in future joint projects/funding applications if more prompt reporting and follow-through were not seen from Cows and Fish in 2001.

Similar concerns about meeting commitments were expressed by evaluation participants from the Highwood River, Drywood Creek and Miscellaneous Creek project areas. Comments included that Cows and Fish was "spread too thin" and that "it was a victim of its own success". However, noticeable improvement on the part of Cows and Fish had been evident recently in the Highwood River and Miscellaneous Creek project areas, specifically through open discussion of issues of concern and more timely interaction between communities and Cows and Fish representatives. Again, while these types of comments of are the exception and not the rule in terms of community experience with Cows and Fish, they are provided here as an indication that concern has been expressed in the past about the program's ability to maintain the type or amount of contact expected by individuals and different community groups based on their unique circumstances.

Suggested Modifications

1. Confirm that sufficient staff resources are in place to complete the RHA process initiated by the Start-up Meeting, so that staff time can be appropriately devoted to work with a community to:
 - ◆ identify and clarify its unique goals;
 - ◆ be available to interact frequently with community members to offset any potential misconceptions;
 - ◆ ensure sufficient follow-through on meetings, projects or other activities on a timely basis; and
 - ◆ ensure that project funding is pursued and that reporting is completed on a timely basis.

6.3 Follow-up Meeting

The actual and potential value of a Follow-up Meeting was expressed in all but one project areas. It can provide the forum in which landowners learn more about the overall health of the project area. It can also provide a valuable opportunity to determine how a community can “move ahead” based on that information. Further, it allows landowners to ask Cows and Fish staff face-to-face to deal with any sensitivity or uncertainty arising from the content of any Landowner Report, thereby encouraging motivation to take the necessary management action. These benefits were particularly apparent in the Nose/West Nose Creek project area where a multi-partner meeting was attended by a variety of individuals and groups interested in riparian issues in that watershed. It is noted that the RHA process in that project area had strong and pro-active involvement by the agricultural fieldman who acted in a leadership role locally (compared, for example, to the lower Little Bow River and Drywood project areas where a strong local leader was less apparent).

The slide presentation portion of the Follow-up Meeting was considered to be very helpful because it provided the required overall perspective for the project area and, in particular, showed the range of variation in health, reducing the potential sense of blame on the part of any given landowner. It was also noted that expected timelines for report delivery and meetings had been well adhered to, particularly in the Elbow River and Nose/West Nose Creek project areas.

However, as indicated in Section 2, attendance among interviewees at Follow-up Meetings was notably lower than at Start-up Meetings. **Concerns expressed about the Follow-up Meeting related primarily to ensuring that landowners were made aware of it, to the timing of the**

meeting, to the need to receive reports in sufficient time to read them prior to the meeting, and that Cows and Fish seemed less available to community members after the meeting to help them address management questions or provide leadership on group action.

Particular concerns about these factors were expressed in the Drywood Creek project area by both landowner interviewees and municipal representatives. They suggested that their dissatisfaction on timing and follow-up had contributed to a noticeable decline in motivation to move ahead with community action on riparian issues, and acknowledged that this was due to a perceived lack of central direction or leadership within the community. Here, landowners looked to the municipality for leadership, and the municipality (citing limited administrative resources and time) looked to Cows and Fish to more actively manage the RHA process.

Again, these concerns reflect a need to carefully articulate roles and expectations at the beginning and throughout the RHA process, keeping in mind available resources at the local level and the need to empower local communities in riparian management. However, in the absence of meaningful contributions from communities, serious consideration should be given by Cows and Fish to determine the appropriateness of continuing to direct a process that is intended to be community-based, when it is not. Open and ongoing discussion of roles and responsibilities, for example those of agricultural fieldmen, should achieve the balance appropriate to the unique circumstances in each community.

The interviewee comments from a number of project areas provided about this RHA tool indicated that maintaining continuity of commitment by the public to awareness-building can be affected by factors that lie outside the control of Cows and Fish (weather, reliability of assessment partners to communicate follow-up information with landowners, no apparent group leader) as well as uncertainty about which parties are responsible for administering different aspects of the process. As a result, this phase of the RHA process, as represented particularly by the low level of use of the Highlights and awareness of/attendance at the Follow-up Meeting, was somewhat ineffective in the overall process of promoting community involvement. When those factors are absent, however, the Follow-up Meeting contributed positively to that involvement.

Suggested Modifications

1. Encourage and maintain an open dialogue with community and municipal representatives, from the beginning and throughout the RHA process, about mutual expectations, available resources and timelines.

2. To prevent notices advising about meetings from falling through the cracks, Cows and Fish should consider taking a more active role in this task. For example, an appropriately worded (and timed) letter sent directly to landowners on a basis concurrent with any letter sent by a municipal district, county or community group, would ensure that everyone received the required information; maintain continuity of contact between landowners and Cows and Fish; and offset any gaps in effort on the part of assessment partners (no matter how well-intentioned).
3. Send the Community Highlights in the same package and at the same time as the Landowner Report, and do so on a timely basis prior to the Follow-up Meeting. This will ensure that both documents are received; illustrate to individuals the scope and intent of Cows and Fish involvement in their project area; and provide the landowner the opportunity to contemplate and develop questions to raise at that meeting, thereby increasing the relevance of information exchange.
4. Ensure meetings are scheduled in such a way to allow sufficient time for reports to be read by recipients prior to the meeting, or to allow for re-scheduling should unforeseen circumstances lead to a change in date.
 - ◆ *Note: It is presumed, with report production scheduling adjustments already implemented by Cows and Fish, that there will be more flexibility in timing future meetings.*

6.4 Crew Contact

Limited information about the assessment field crew was provided by evaluation participants because most landowners had very brief interactions with them, as described in Section 2.

However, the crew's professional and conscientious dealings with landowners were frequently remarked upon. In particular, the crew was were found to be reliable in requesting permission for access, arrived and departed when promised, and answered questions to the best of their ability. It was observed that the crew took their responsibilities seriously and evidently enjoyed their work.

In addition to comments about the field crew specifically, the value of personal interaction with landowners in developing knowledge and motivating riparian management action was repeatedly illustrated in this evaluation by participant comments about the significant

contributions made by Cows and Fish staff such as Greg Hale and Michael Gerrand (who understandably was not necessarily identified by participants as being part of the field crew as such). Many participants related how any information they received (whether at meetings or in reports) was always made more relevant to their local situation when “you can walk the stream with [Cows and Fish]” or “sit down and talk it through”. The particular skills of the two individuals mentioned in facilitating the building of knowledge about riparian ecology, and management options, were consistently rated as excellent.

6.5 Field Day

Due to the small number of evaluation participants who had been involved with this RHA tool, limited conclusions can be made about its impact on awareness or action overall. However, it was observed throughout this evaluation by references made by participants that Field Days notably increase landowner understanding of the Landowner Report tool specifically in terms of the importance of health monitoring. It is suggested, therefore, that the Field Day is fundamental to building awareness. Further, the degree to which those participants (who had not participated in any field activities) requested that type of learning opportunity appeared to reinforce its value in building awareness.

Suggested Modifications

1. Promote the use of Field Days for potential assessment participants in order to maximize their ability to interpret its results and act upon them.

7. CONCLUSION

This evaluation has examined the role and impact of programming tools produced by Cows and Fish as part of the RHA process. Two tools that formed the focus of the evaluation, the Landowner Report and the Community Report, were found to reasonably fulfill their roles in documenting and explaining the assessments conducted and should continue to be provided to community members. Their impact in promoting awareness and action can be enhanced, however, by adopting the content and stylistic modifications suggested in this evaluation, all of which are drawn from community feedback. It is acknowledged that the very nature of the tools is such that, alone, they do not and cannot ensure management change on the part of any individual; rather, they form part of a series of additive awareness tools that together are designed to build a comprehensive

level of awareness among community members. In particular, it was found that the impact of Landowner Report increased significantly when it had been provided in conjunction with other Cows and Fish awareness tools, specifically those that provide opportunities for personal interaction with program staff and that permit individuals to visualize and discuss management options on the ground (for example, Follow-up Meetings and Field Days). This finding is consistent with the program's approach of building knowledge first that then enables communities and individuals to move toward management change. Value was also found in the Landowner Report in terms of providing useful benchmark data for future monitoring purposes and for protecting landowners against perceived future, externally-imposed management requirements.

The Community Report provided a worthwhile record to community groups and municipal representatives by educating them about the overall health of their project areas, encouraging individual group members to adjust management action, and enabling community groups to more strategically participate in other local land-use issues such as infrastructure development and water quality.

The Start-up Meeting was acknowledged to be a positive and crucial step in building commitment to the RHA process and awareness about riparian health. Viewpoints on the Follow-up Meeting were mixed. Some participants viewed it as an extremely positive and informative step that helped them understand the status of their individual assessments as well as issues relevant to their project area in general. Others identified the Follow-up Meeting (and the accompanying Community Highlights document) as a relatively weak RHA tool because motivation to participate in the process had declined leading up to the meeting (and following it). This apparently was due to of perceived lack of leadership or guidance to maintain interest and commitment, whether at the local municipal level or on the part of Cows and Fish (despite best efforts reported to deliver the tool efficiently). Efforts aimed at clarifying roles and responsibilities expected within each community, at the beginning and throughout the RHA process, may readily address these types of concerns.

Evaluation participants consistently identified their need for additional follow-through by Cows and Fish to develop further awareness and, more specifically, provide direction on specific management options that they can pursue as a result of their assessments. In particular, more opportunities to discuss individual assessment results in-person (on-site or at community meetings), to obtain technical information to assist in management decisions and implementation (for those further along in the awareness process), and to identify potential management options by experiencing and visualizing them at events such as Field Days, were all suggested as essential

steps in moving from the foundation of awareness to taking specific management action. These types of requests may reflect the need for Cows and Fish to examine its mandate to clarify where its involvement in community-based action appropriately begins and ends.

INTERVIEW GUIDE

**PART 1
IDENTIFICATION**

PARTICIPANT NAME: _____
ASSESSMENT YEAR: _____

STREAM/RIVER: _____
INTERVIEW DATE: _____

ROLE: **Producer/Landowner** 1
Community Rep 2 (i.e. speaking as community rep, not producer)
Ag Fieldman 3
Councillor 4

PRIOR TO STARTING THE INTERVIEW, GIVE THIS GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE AWARENESS PURPOSE, WITHOUT GIVING ANY HINTS/ANSWERS.

Before starting, I'll just mention -- and you probably already know -- that riparian health assessment is a landscape monitoring technique that is meant to give you an understanding of how your riparian areas are functioning, to determine what their condition or health is, so that you can be more effective in maintaining your operation. It's about understanding the value of riparian areas and what it takes to keep them healthy, which is an important part of management.

**PART 2
PARTICIPATION**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
All			There are several pieces or stages that make up the Cows and Fish community riparian health assessment process. We'll only need to talk about the ones that you're familiar with, so to begin could you please tell me which of the following you have participated in or received? <i>USE THESE ANSWERS TO DETERMINE WHICH OF THE SUBSEQUENT QUESTIONS TO ASK</i>
All		1.1	Did you attend: One or more community meeting(s) where you and other people in your area or watershed first decided to start with riparian assessments in your area -- this might have happened as long ago as two or three years, but would have been <u>before</u> any actual assessments were done Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Didn't know about it/hear about it <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Heard about it but not in time to plan to attend <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5 N/A <input type="checkbox"/> 6

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
		1.2	<p><i>IF YES or NO or NOT ENOUGH TIME:</i></p> <p>How did you hear about this start-up meeting?</p> <hr/>
	All	2.1	<p>Did you attend:</p> <p>A community meeting that would have been held <u>after</u> all the health assessments were completed in your area, at which Cows and Fish presented the summarized results of all the assessments in your area?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Didn't know about it/hear about it <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Heard about it but not in time to plan to attend <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5 N/A <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
		2.2	<p><i>IF YES or NO or NOT ENOUGH TIME:</i></p> <p>How did you hear about this follow-up meeting?</p> <hr/>
	All	3.1	<p>Did you attend:</p> <p>One or more riparian health assessment field days, where the assessment technique was demonstrated by Cows and Fish representatives (this might have been at a location in your own area or elsewhere in the province)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Didn't know about it/hear about it <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Heard about it but not in time to plan to attend <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5 N/A <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
		3.2	<p><i>IF YES or NO or NOT ENOUGH TIME:</i></p> <p>How did you hear about the field day(s)?</p> <hr/>
	All	4.1	<p>And, have you had any contact with any of the field crew who contacted you to make arrangements for your assessments and/or who came to your <i>property/area</i> to complete the assessment on-site (Michael Gerrand, Suzanne Witham, etc. etc.)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	All	5.1	<p><i>(REFERRING TO THEIR LANDOWNER REPORT):</i></p> <p>Did you read your landowner report prior to me contacting you?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0</p> <p><i>IF NO:</i></p> <p>What was the reason for that?</p> <hr/>
	All	6.1	<p><i>(SHOWING COPY OF REPORT):</i></p> <p>Did you get:</p> <p>A copy of the overall community report that covered all the assessment results for your area or watershed (this would have been prepared for your <i>community group leader/municipal/county rep</i> and you would only have it if you'd contacted that person to get your own copy)?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Didn't know about it/hear about it <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5 N/A <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
		6.2	<p><i>IF YES:</i></p> <p>How or where did you get your copy?</p> <hr/>
		6.3	<p><i>IF YES:</i></p> <p>Did you read the report?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0</p>
	All	7.1	<p><i>(SHOWING COPY OF HIGHLIGHTS):</i></p> <p>Did you receive:</p> <p>A copy of the short Community Highlights Summary document, a briefer version of the community report, covering assessments done throughout your whole area?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Didn't know about it/hear about it <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5 N/A <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
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7.2 IF YES:
How or where did you get your copy?

7.3 IF YES:
Did you read the Highlights Summary?
Yes 1
No 0

**PART 3
INDIVIDUAL REPORT**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
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**Producer/
Landowner**

*IF ≠ PROD,
GO TO NEXT
SECTION:
COMM'Y
REPORT*

Let's start first with the landowner report.

REFERRING TO DOCUMENT: As you know, it's set up under several headings, like "Why a Riparian Health Assessment?", "What We Found on Your Place", "Riparian Management Discussion", and also has some attachments, such as an air photo, a score sheet, glossary, plant list and so on.

*IF PROD HAS
READ BOTH
COMM'Y AND
HIGHLIGHTS,
SKIP COMM'Y
AND DO
HIGHLIGHTS
ONLY*
Landowner

Before we go on to the individual sections of the report, here are some general questions about it. You can answer by picking the category you are most comfortable with.

8.1 Prior to receiving your landowner report, how did you feel about the health of your riparian areas?

They did not need any improvement 1
They needed some improvement 2
They needed a lot of improvement 3
Not sure whether they needed improvement 5

Landowner

9.1 Thinking about your landowner report, was it:

Easy to read and understand 1
Moderately easy to read and understand 2
Difficult to read and understand 3

9.2 Thinking about the amount of information in your report, do you think the report had:

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
				Too little information <input type="checkbox"/> 1 About the right amount of information <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Too much information <input type="checkbox"/> 3
			9.3	Thinking about the <u>type</u> of information in your report, do you think it had: A lot of useful information you didn't know before <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Some useful information you didn't know before <input type="checkbox"/> 2 It contained no useful information that was new to you <input type="checkbox"/> 3
	Landowner		10.1	What can you tell me about what you liked most and disliked most about the report overall? First, in a few words, what did you like overall, if anything? _____ _____
			10.2	What did you dislike overall, if anything? _____
	Landowner			Now, if we could briefly walk through your report and, looking at the section headings, please comment on any information that you think was particularly worthwhile or that you think was not worthwhile, and tell me why. For example, do you think the information provided was appropriate, what other information would you have liked to have seen instead, or what information could have been left out of, any of those sections? Be as detailed as you'd like about the sections you have comments on, and just skip those sections that you don't have any particular comment on.
	Landowner		11.1	Why a Riparian Health Assessment? _____ _____ _____
			11.2	Why are Healthy Riparian Areas Important? _____ _____ _____
			11.3	What We Found on Your Place _____ _____ _____

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
			11.4	Riparian Management Discussion _____ _____ _____
			11.5	Next Steps _____ _____ _____
			11.6	Facing the Issues _____ _____ _____
			11.7	Air Photo _____ _____ _____
			11.8	Score Sheet _____ _____ _____
			11.9	Glossary/Interpretation of Score Sheet Parameters _____ _____ _____
			11.10	Riparian Plant List _____ _____ _____
			11.11	Recommended Readings _____ _____ _____

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
			11.12	Polygon Photographs <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	Landowner		12.1	I'd like to ask just two particular questions about specific sections of the report. In the "What We Found on Your Place" section, did you agree with the health ratings assigned to the polygons assessed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
			12.2	Why? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	Landowner		13.1	And the second question is in the "Riparian Management Discussion" section that covers several topics relating to each individual polygon. Did you find the detail provided there to be: Very Useful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Moderately Useful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not Useful <input type="checkbox"/> 3
			13.2	Why? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
	Landowner		14.1	<i>AFTER FINISHING REPORT SECTION REVIEW:</i> Was there any one key piece of information in the report that you found the most useful in planning future management for the polygons assessed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
			14.2	If <u>YES</u> : <u>What was it?</u> <hr/> <hr/>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
			14.3	<p><i>If YES:</i></p> <p><u>How</u> useful was that piece of information?</p> <p>Very useful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Moderately useful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Minimally useful <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>
	Landowner		15.1	<p>Were any riparian management improvements suggested in your report?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0</p>
			15.2	<p><i>IF YES:</i></p> <p>How likely do you think that you will be able to implement at least one of those recommendations?</p> <p>Already implemented <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Very likely <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Somewhat likely <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Very unlikely <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
			15.3	<p><i>IF VERY LIKELY OR SOMEWHAT LIKELY:</i></p> <p><u>When</u> do you think it will be reasonable for you to implement any of the recommendations?</p> <p>Already implemented <input type="checkbox"/> 1 In one to two years <input type="checkbox"/> 2 In three to five years <input type="checkbox"/> 3 More than five years <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
			15.4	<p><i>IF NOT VERY LIKELY OR NOT SURE:</i></p> <p>And what is the <u>main</u> reason for you not being able to implement them?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
			15.5	<p>Briefly, was there any <u>other</u> reason that might affect you <u>not</u> being able to implement any of the report's recommendations?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
	Landowner		16.1	<p>How satisfied were you with the timeliness of receiving your landowner report, after the health assessment was actually conducted on your place?</p> <p>Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Somewhat unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Very unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
			16.2	<p>Comments?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
			16.3	<p>In general, in terms of you being able to plan for the <u>following year's</u> management, in any given year, when would be the best <u>time</u> of year to receive a report like this?</p> <p>January to March <input type="checkbox"/> 1 April to June <input type="checkbox"/> 2 July to September <input type="checkbox"/> 3 October to December <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Any time <input type="checkbox"/> 7 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 6</p>
	Landowner		17.1	<p><u>After</u> receiving your landowner report, how do you feel about your the health of your riparian areas?</p> <p>They do not need any improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 1 They need some improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 2 They need a lot of improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure whether they need improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
	Landowner		18.1	<p>And overall, how useful has this report been in raising your <u>personal awareness</u> about riparian health in general?</p> <p>Very useful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat useful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not useful at all <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
	Landowner		19.1	<p>And lastly, how <u>over and above the interest you already had</u>, how motivating was this report in encouraging you to <u>manage</u> your riparian areas for greater riparian health?</p> <p>You found it very motivating <input type="checkbox"/> 1 You found it somewhat motivating <input type="checkbox"/> 2 It did not motivate you <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>

**PART 4
COMMUNITY REPORT
(NOTE - USED AS GENERAL GUIDE ONLY - QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTED)**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	All who answered <u>YES</u> to #6.3 - READ THE COMMUNITY REPORT	20.1	Prior to getting this community report, how did you feel about the health of the riparian areas in [<i>the project area - specify creek/watershed</i>]?
			They did not need any improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 1 They needed some improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 2 They needed a lot of improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure whether they needed improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 5
	As above	21.1	Thinking now about this community report generally, was it:
			Easy to read and understand <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Moderately easy to read and understand <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Difficult to read and understand <input type="checkbox"/> 3
			21.2
			Too little information? <input type="checkbox"/> 1 About the right amount of information? <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Too much information? <input type="checkbox"/> 3
		21.3	Thinking about the <u>type</u> of information in the report, do you think it had:
			A lot of useful information you didn't know before <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Some useful information you didn't know before <input type="checkbox"/> 2 It contained no useful information that was new to you <input type="checkbox"/> 3
	As above	22.1	What can you tell me about what you liked most and disliked most about the report overall?
			First, in just a few words, what did you like overall, if anything? _____ _____ _____
		22.2	What did you dislike overall, if anything? _____ _____ _____

Now, if we could briefly walk through the report and, looking at the section headings, please comment on any information that you think was particularly worthwhile or that you think was not worthwhile, and tell me why. **For example, do you think the information provided was appropriate, what other information would you have liked to have seen instead, or what information could have been left out of, any of those sections?** Be as detailed as you want and just skip those sections that you don't have any particular comment on.

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	As above	23.1	Why a Riparian Health Assessment? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
		23.2	Why are Healthy Riparian Areas Important? <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
		23.3	What Did We Find <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
		23.4	Riparian Management Discussion <hr/> <hr/>
		23.5	Next Steps <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
		23.6	Project Area Map <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
		23.7	Overall Health Pie Chart <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
		23.8	Polygon Photographs by Health Category <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
		23.9	Health Parameters Bar Chart _____
		23.10	Facing the Issues _____ _____ _____
		23.11	Glossary/Interpretation of Score Sheet Parameters _____ _____ _____
		23.12	Score Sheet _____ _____ _____
		23.13	Riparian Plant Inventory _____ _____ _____
		23.14	Recommended Readings _____ _____ _____
		23.15	Tools for Riparian Management _____ _____ _____
	As above	24.1	<p><i>AFTER FINISHING REPORT SECTION REVIEW:</i></p> <p>Was there any one key piece of information in the community report that you found the most useful in planning future management for <i>[the project area - specify creek/watershed]</i>?</p>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0 Not Sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
		24.2	If <u>YES</u> : <u>What</u> was it? <hr/> <hr/>
		24.3	If <u>YES</u> : <u>How</u> useful was that piece of information? Very useful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Moderately useful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Minimally useful <input type="checkbox"/> 3
	As above	25.1	Were any riparian management improvements suggested in the report? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0
		25.2	IF <u>YES</u> : How likely do you think it is that your <i>MD/community group</i> will be able to implement at least one of those recommendations? Already implemented <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Very likely <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Somewhat likely <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not very likely <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
		25.3	IF <u>VERY LIKELY OR SOMEWHAT LIKELY</u> : <u>When</u> do you think it will be reasonable to implement any of the recommendations? Already implemented <input type="checkbox"/> 1 In one to two years <input type="checkbox"/> 2 In three to five years <input type="checkbox"/> 3 More than five years <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
	As above	26.1	And what is the <u>main</u> reason for you not being able to implement them? <hr/> <hr/>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
		26.2	Briefly, was there any <u>other</u> reason that might affect you <u>not</u> being able to implement any of the report's recommendations? <hr/> <hr/>
	As above	27.1	How satisfied were you with the timeliness of receiving your community report, after the health assessments were actually conducted in your area? Very satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Somewhat unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Very unsatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
		27.2	Comments? <hr/> <hr/>
		27.3	In general, in terms of you being able to plan for the <u>following year's</u> management, in any given year, when would be the best <u>time</u> of year to receive a report like this? January to March <input type="checkbox"/> 1 April to June <input type="checkbox"/> 2 July to September <input type="checkbox"/> 3 October to December <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Any time <input type="checkbox"/> 7 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
	As above	28.1	How useful has this report been in raising your <u>personal awareness</u> about riparian issues in general? Very useful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat useful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not useful at all <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
		28.2	And still speaking about yourself personally, <u>over and above the interest you already had</u> , how motivating has the community report been in encouraging you to help manage your community's riparian areas for greater riparian health? You found it very motivating <input type="checkbox"/> 1 You found it somewhat motivating <input type="checkbox"/> 2 It did not motivate you <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	As above	29.1	<p>After receiving the community report, how do you feel about the health of the riparian areas in <i>the project area - specify creek/watershed?</i></p> <p>They do not need any improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 1 They need some improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 2 They need a lot of improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure whether they need improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
	As above	30.1	<p>How much do you think this report has or will increase <u>your community's participation</u> in community efforts to improve riparian health?</p> <p>It has or will increase a lot <input type="checkbox"/> 1 It has or will increase somewhat <input type="checkbox"/> 2 It has not or will not increase it at all <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
		30.2	<p>Please describe some things that have occurred in your community, if any, as a result of this report.</p> <hr/> <hr/>

**PART 5
COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	All who answered <u>YES</u> to #7.3 - READ THE COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS		There are just a few questions about the Community Highlights Summary.
	NOT ASKED	31.1	<p><u>Prior</u> to receiving and reading this Community Highlights Summary, how did you feel about the health of your riparian areas?</p> <p>They did not need any improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 1 They needed some improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 2 They needed a lot of improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure whether they needed improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
	As above	32.1	<p>What did you like <u>most</u> about the Community Highlights Summary?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
		32.2	<p>And, what did you like <u>least</u> about the Community Highlights Summary?</p> <hr/> <hr/>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	As above	33.1	<p>And, <u>without considering the information contained in your own <i>landowner/community</i> report</u>, how useful was the Community Highlights Summary in raising your awareness about riparian health?</p> <p>Very useful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat useful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not useful at all <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
	Producers / landowners only	34.1	<p>How important was it to you to learn about your community's overall riparian health in deciding what management action, if any, might be necessary on your own place?</p> <p>Very important <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat important <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not important <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>
	For all others	34.2	<p>How important was it to you to have this type of brief Highlights Summary of community riparian health in addition to the overall community report?</p> <p>Very important <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat important <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not important <input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>
	Producers / landowner only - NOT ASKED	35.1	<p>After learning about your community's overall riparian health, as described in the Community Highlights Summary, how do you feel about the health of your own riparian areas?</p> <p>They do not need any improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 1 They need some improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 2 They need a lot of improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure whether they need improvement <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>

**PART 6
START UP MEETING**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	All who answered <u>YES</u> to #1.1 - START UP MEETING	36.1	<p>There are only three questions about the start-up meeting that you indicated you attended, where the decision was made to go ahead with community riparian health assessments in your area.</p> <p>What motivated you to attend the start-up meeting?</p> <hr/> <hr/>

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
		37.1	<p>How comfortable were you with the way that the decision was made at that meeting to go ahead with the community riparian health assessments in your area?</p> <p>Very comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat comfortable <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Somewhat uncomfortable <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Very uncomfortable <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>
		37.2	<p>Comments?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
		38.1	<p>What, if anything, was the one most valuable thing that you learned about riparian health at the start-up meeting?</p> <hr/> <hr/>

**PART 7
FOLLOW-UP MEETING**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	All who answered <u>YES</u> to #2.1 - FOLLOW UP MEETING		There are only two questions about the follow-up meeting that you indicated you attended. This is the meeting where the results of the community-wide riparian health assessments were presented.
		39.1	<p>What motivated you to attend the meeting?</p> <hr/> <hr/>
		40.1	<p>What, if anything, was the one most valuable thing that you learned about riparian health at the follow-up meeting?</p> <hr/> <hr/>

**PART 8
RIPARIAN FIELD DAYS**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
	All who answered <u>YES</u> to #3.1 - FIELD DAYS			And there are just two questions about the riparian field day(s) that you indicated you attended.
			41.1	What motivated you to attend the riparian field day(s)? _____ _____
			42.1	What, if anything, was the one most valuable thing that you learned about riparian health at the riparian field day(s)? _____ _____

**PART 9
CREW CONTACT**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Q#	Dialogue
	All who answered <u>YES</u> to #4.1 - CREW CONTACT		To wrap up, we'd like to get an understanding of the role of the Cows and Fish field crew staff in the riparian health assessment process.
		43.1	In terms of the <u>amount</u> of contact you had with the field crew during the whole riparian health assessment process, was there: Too much contact with you <input type="checkbox"/> 1 About the right amount of contact with you <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not enough contact with you <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
		44.1	How helpful were the field crew in making the health assessment a worthwhile experience for you? Very helpful <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Somewhat helpful <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Not helpful <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Not sure <input type="checkbox"/> 5
		45.1	Please describe your experience(s) with the field crew, in a frank way. For example were all your questions answered, and did you understand what the crew was doing, and so on? _____ _____

**PART 10
SUMMARY**

Reporting Category TBA	Who Gets Asked	Code	Q#	Dialogue
All	All		46.1	<p>To wrap up, there are three final questions.</p> <p>Of all the pieces, or stages, of the Cows and Fish riparian health assessment process that we've talked about, please name the two pieces that were most beneficial to you. Please name the most beneficial first, and then name the second most beneficial.</p> <p>Landowner report <input type="checkbox"/> 1 Community report <input type="checkbox"/> 2 Community Highlights Summary <input type="checkbox"/> 3 Start-up meeting <input type="checkbox"/> 4 Follow-up meeting <input type="checkbox"/> 5 Riparian field days <input type="checkbox"/> 6 Contact with the field crew <input type="checkbox"/> 7 None were beneficial <input type="checkbox"/> 8</p>
			46.2	<p>Why?</p> <p>1. _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>2. _____</p> <p>_____</p>
All	All		47.1	<p>The Cows and Fish community riparian health assessment process can take a few years to complete from the time interest is first expressed about riparian health in a community, until the time when all the riparian health information is collected and delivered back to the community for their use.</p> <p>Can you comment on how, in your experience, that process has worked for you?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
All	All		48.1	<p>And lastly, have you received any feedback from others in your community about the health assessment process?</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> 1 No <input type="checkbox"/> 0</p> <p><i>If NO, end interview.</i></p>
			48.2	<p><i>If YES:</i></p> <p>Without naming names, can you describe who (e.g. neighbours or municipal politicians) this feedback has come from, what it was about, and whether it was positive, neutral or negative?</p> <p>_____</p>