

Is my Stream Sick? Is my Lakeshore Lame? What is a Cows and Fish Riparian Health Assessment?

Cows and Fish

Riparian areas are the green zones around our rivers, lakes, streams, ponds and sloughs. They are a critical portion of the landscape helping to keep our water supplies clean, our ranching and farming communities sustainable, and our fish and wildlife populations healthy.

Like people, riparian areas need to be healthy and functioning properly. At the request of a local group or individual, the Cows and Fish program helps agricultural producers and their communities understand the health of their riparian areas in their watersheds by using a measuring stick called riparian health assessment. Riparian health assessment is essentially a report card that gives landowners an understanding of the health and condition of their riparian areas. This information allows landowners and communities to identify concerns and proactively address specific land use issues.

Riparian health assessments are often a good starting point for communities venturing into watershed management. They provide a snapshot of the health of their riparian area and point out potential areas to focus future management on. Health assessments provide the foundation for action plans, helping define management changes and priorities. The information can be used to help improve awareness of riparian issues within the community, to motivate the community into action, and as a monitoring tool to evaluate success.

For more information on riparian health assessment contact Cows and Fish at 403-381-5538 or view their website at www.cowsandfish.org.