

Cows and Fish

Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Program

Looking At My Riparian Area

Do I have a problem?

Often, a riparian area will change so slowly and over such a prolonged period of time, that we may not notice what has happened to it. Here are some obvious signs to watch for that may indicate management problems in your riparian areas:

Lake or Stream Characteristics

- stream channel becoming wide and shallow
- more cloudy, turbid water and/or increased sediment in the lake or stream
- stream cutting down; unable to overflow its banks during annual spring runoff

Lake and Stream Banks

- bank damage by recreation or hoof action
- active bank or shore erosion from exposed soils
- physical changes to the shore/bank like riprap, retaining walls, or other structures added
- most of bank or shore is altered; little unaffected

Riparian Area Around the Waterbody

- drainage of wet meadows, lowering of water tables
- changes in the timing and magnitude of floods due to human activities or modifications

Vegetation in the Riparian Area

- reduced vegetation, many bare spots
- poor plant vigour, few desirable native forage plants, small forage plants, little carryover of litter
- declining forage production
- mostly lawn grass present; change in plant species composition to drier, upland types
- willows have mushroom shape - trees and shrubs hedged, browsed
- reduction in overhanging vegetation into lake or stream
- all trees or tall shrubs are old, no young trees, saplings or young sprouts to replace them
- no trees or shrubs
- a lot of undesirable or noxious weeds invasion like thistle, dandelions, etc. (do not include cattails, reeds, or native water plants-they are not weeds)

Wildlife

- wildlife species rarely linger in riparian areas
- nesting song bird numbers are low
- fish no longer abundant or have disappeared

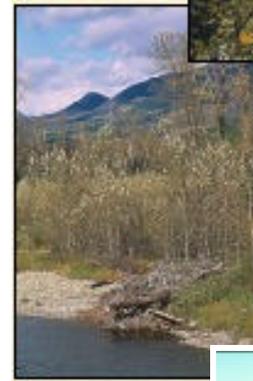
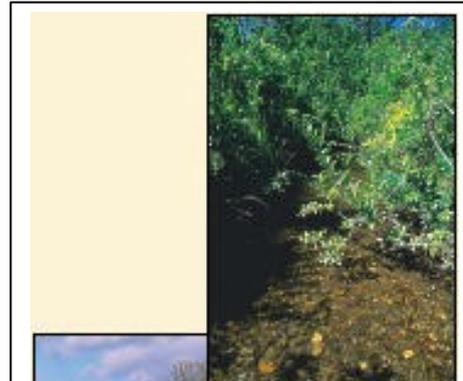
If you answered "YES" many times, these are signs that your riparian area may be at risk or unhealthy; you might think about some management changes.

Yes No

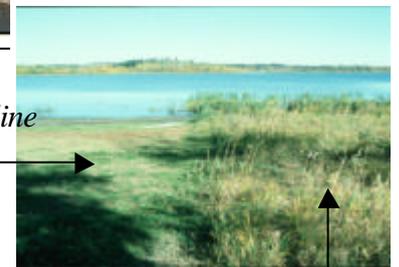


- ◆ *Less yard work*
- ◆ *More privacy*
- ◆ *More scenic*
- ◆ *Healthy shoreline*
- ◆ *Habitat for fish and wildlife*
- ◆ *Cleaner water*

Compare



Does your shoreline look like this?



Or is it more like this?

