Riparian Grazing Strategies

# What are Riparian Areas?

*(One of a series)*

## Program Partners

- Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- Environment Canada
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
- Manitoba Cattle Producers Association
- Manitoba Conservation
- Manitoba Habitat Heritage Corporation
- Manitoba Water Stewardship

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This and other related material, including a stocking rate calculator, an aerial photo library and other pasture management tools, can be found at www.riparianhealth.ca

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## Riparian Benefits, Products and Services

Healthy riparian areas provide water, livestock forage, fish and wildlife habitat and recreational opportunities. They also decrease the risk and damage caused by flooding. These services and benefits are presented in the following table:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Clean Water** | Lower risk of human illness |
| | Reduced water treatment costs |
| | Fish populations maintained |
| | Healthier livestock |
| | Greater weight gains for livestock |
| **Water Supply** | Domestic, agricultural, and industrial needs can be met |
| | Reduced risk and cost of water supply |
| | Competitive advantage for business |
| | Maintain fish and wildlife populations |
| | Waste assimilation |
| | Drought management and amelioration |
| | Tourism and recreation |
| | Decreased incidence, risk and cost of floods |
| **Buffering Capacity** | Decreased incidence, risk and cost of erosion |
| | Local climate moderation |
| | Resilience allowing rapid recovery from disturbance |
| | More stable production of other goods and services |
| **Soil Creation** | Higher agricultural production |
| | Nutrient recycling |
| | Higher property values |
| | Greater water storage |
| **Plants** | Sustain livestock, fish and wildlife |
| | Economic opportunities |
| | Shade and shelter |
| | Reduce risk to wildlife |
| | Moderate stream temperatures |
| | Supply of woody debris |
| | Maintains channel processes |
| | Habitat connectivity, migration routes connected |
| | Timber, fuel wood production |
| | Trap and store carbon |
| **Fish & Wildlife** | Hunting and fishing |
| | Recreational opportunity |
| | Tourism and economic opportunity |
| | Fur production |
| | Subsistence use |
| | Commercial fisheries |
| **Aesthetics** | Tourism |
| | Recreation |
| | Competitive advantage for individuals to relocate |
| | Higher property values |
| | Enjoyment and pleasure in healthy ecosystem |

(adapted from Fitch, L. and N. Ambrose, 2003. Riparian Areas: A User's Guide to Health. Lethbridge, Alberta: Cows and Fish Program.)

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## Why are Riparian Areas Important?

Riparian areas provide the landscape with resiliency and stability and perform important ecological functions.

Resiliency helps the landscape bounce back from floods, droughts, or other extreme events. Healthy, resilient riparian areas provide stable water sources and wildlife habitat allowing stressed landscapes to return to a healthy state more quickly.

Riparian areas provide stability to the landscape by reducing the frequency and magnitude of extreme changes in the river systems. If properly managed, riparian areas will maintain themselves and remain stable over long periods.

Riparian areas are the green zones bordering streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands.

The presence of water is a key feature of all riparian areas. The water may be at or near the surface and the amount varies seasonally and from year to year. The vegetation that grows here requires or tolerates an abundance of water. Soils in riparian areas have been enhanced by processes such as sediment deposition and by productive vegetation. Typically, the riparian area includes the floodplain, shoreline or streambank.

Because riparian vegetation is more lush and diverse due to better soils and water availability, riparian areas often remain green even when vegetation in the surrounding uplands has turned brown due to droughty conditions.

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