



Stewarding Riparian Areas



Riparian areas are the green buffers next to streams, lakes and wetlands where vegetation is influenced by high water levels. Although they make up only a small part of the land base, they play an oversized role as high value ecosystems that: stabilize streambanks, protect water quality by filtering nutrients and pollutants, and regulates water temperature. They are highly diverse ecosystems that provide critical wildlife habitat and travel corridors, and help support healthy aquatic habitat.

How to identify a riparian area:

1. Lots of water seasonally or regularly that is close to, or on the surface.
2. The vegetation that is present is associated with high water environments.
3. Soils have been modified by the abundance of water.

*All development projects near a stream, river, creek, pond, lake, or a connected ditch, spring or wetland are protected by law if they are fish bearing or connected to a fish bearing body. Some laws that apply are the *Riparian Areas Protection Act*, the *Fish Act*, the *Fish Protection Act* and the *Water Act*.

TAKE A WALK ALONG THE RIVER

Natural flood protection: Healthy natural riparian shorelines help mitigate floods by absorbing water. Recharge aquifers which store, hold and slowly release water.

Keep your drinking water clean: Healthy native vegetation filters sediment and contaminants in water before it reaches your well.

Biodiverse: There are high levels of biodiversity in wetlands and riparian areas as they are the only place many water loving species can survive.

Critical habitat for threatened wildlife: Home to Western Screech Owl, Lewis' Woodpecker and helps support many migratory birds. They provide the breeding ground needed for invertebrates that feed the endangered Little Brown Bat.

Intrinsic beauty: We are naturally drawn to the beauty of water. Riparian areas provide a calming place to reflect and enjoy nature.

Critical for the health of salmon populations: Tall vegetation provides shade and helps keep streams cool. Insects drop from overhanging vegetation into water, where they become fish food.



Western Screech Owl



Lewis' Woodpecker



*Little Brown Bat;
D. Minialoff, iNaturalist*





WHAT YOU CAN DO: PARTICIPATE IN STEWARDSHIP!

1. **Protect what you have**
2. **Restore what you've lost**

Small “hobby farm” operations may think their impact on the environment is small, however when you consider many small farms along a riparian corridor all of the cumulative effects add up.

1. **Leave it alone:** It may be tempting to try and manure your property up to the waters edge but leaving a 20 metre strip of wild, natural vegetation along a waterway will preserve biodiversity, provide a corridor for wildlife to travel and prevent flooding and erosion.
2. **Prevent livestock from congregating near riparian areas.** Livestock, including horses, goats, pigs, cattle or even chickens should be watered in an off-stream location if possible. Livestock pens should be at least 30 metres back from surface water.

3. **Manure management:** Livestock manure contains bacteria, nitrogen, ammonia, and phosphates. When rain falls on manure, these contaminants can be carried to local waterways by rainwater runoff. Excess amounts of nitrogen and phosphorous cause algal blooms which produce toxins dangerous to humans, livestock, and aquatic life.
4. **Restore riparian areas:** Take on your own mini restoration project by restoring degraded riparian areas. Try using live willow or cottonwood stakes to increase the brush along the edges and stabilize banks. For instructions on how to use live staking and a list of recommended riparian species for the Thompson-Nicola visit tncollaborative.org/bmp-acreages/.
5. **Keep riparian areas pesticide-free:** There is a legal requirement to keep pesticides a minimum of 10 metres from the high water mark. This will ensure that chemical spray does not drift into the aquatic environment harming fish.

FUNDING AND SUPPORT

Landowners have the opportunity to apply for funding through several different avenues as an individual or partnered up with a conservation organisation. For a full list of funding sources that may be available to you head to tncollaborative.org/resources.

Looking for more information? Contact:

- Agriservice BC
Telephone: 1 888 221-7141
Email: AgriServiceBC@gov.bc.ca
- Your local Environmental Farm Plan Advisor
iafbc.ca/environmental-farm-plan

