

Looking at my Lakeshore

riparian health checklist



Riparian Areas

Riparian areas are moist areas of water-loving plants that border a lake, wetland, stream or river. They are very important ecologically, socially and economically. A healthy riparian area helps reduce bank and shoreline erosion, trap sediments, filter pollutants, improve water quality and provide forage and fish and wildlife habitat. Riparian areas can be part of your property, part of the shoreline and within environmental and municipal reserves.

How do you know if your riparian area is healthy? Take a look at the photos at the right. Does your riparian area look like one of these or does it lie somewhere in between? To better assess the health of the riparian area on your lake or wetland, fill in the checklist below:



Which best resembles your riparian area? A or B or somewhere in between?



Lakeshore Riparian Health CHECKLIST

Answer the eleven questions below to find out how healthy your lakeshore is. If you are unsure about an answer, leave it blank.



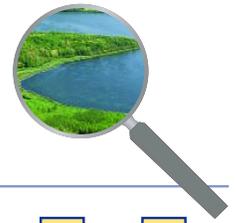
- 1 85% or more of the riparian area is covered with vegetation (of any kind). Yes No
- 2 More that 50% of the riparian plants are as tall as your knees. Yes No
- 3 Cattails or bulrushes are growing in the riparian area. Yes No
- 4 Willows and/or other shrubs and trees are growing in the riparian area, with young plants present to replace the older ones over time. Yes No
- 5 Plants such as Kentucky bluegrass (lawn grass), clover, creeping red fescue and dandelion represent less than 15% of all the plants growing in the riparian area. Native plants dominate the riparian area. Yes No



Continued on the other side . . .



Lakeshore Riparian Health CHECKLIST



	6	Noxious weeds make up less than 15% of all the plants in the riparian area (examples include Canada thistle, purple loosestrife, scentless chamomile and perennial sow thistle).	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	7	Riparian area (bank and shore) has NOT been disced, had rocks or soil moved or removed or been physically reshaped by recreational activities or livestock.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	8	The riparian area has NOT been repeatedly mowed or heavily grazed or had fertilizer and/or herbicides applied.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	9	Sand, gravel or rocks have NOT been imported into the riparian area.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	10	I presently spend less than 10% of my total yard work time in the riparian area (include this question if you are a lakeshore resident).	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	11	Wildlife are often seen in the riparian area.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Checklist Summary

How many of these questions did you answer **YES**? and how many did you answer **NO**?

Interpreting Your Score

If you answered **YES** to 8 or more of the questions, and the riparian area looks like the riparian area in picture A, it is likely that the riparian area is **healthy**, which means it is performing key riparian functions like storing water, trapping sediment, buffering the impact of flooding, providing primary productivity and providing fish and wildlife habitat.

If you answered **NO** to 8 or more of the questions, and the riparian area looks like the riparian area in picture B, it is likely that the riparian area is **unhealthy and not functioning properly**.

If you answered **NO** to 3 or more of these questions, and the riparian area resembles a combination of pictures A and B, the riparian area is likely **healthy but with problems**. Some riparian functions may be impaired.

For detailed information, contact Cows and Fish or the Vincent Lake Working Group (see below):

This fact sheet was developed in partnership and with support from members of the Vincent Lake Working Group: Alberta Conservation Association, Public Lands Division and Fish and Wildlife Division Alberta Sustainable Resource Development, and Cows and Fish.

Checklist summaries that indicate the riparian area is healthy but with problems or unhealthy can often be corrected by changing what you do. For example, cottagers can let the riparian area grow naturally without mowing, adding fertilizer, importing sand, discing, or removing rocks. Producers can manage cattle grazing to avoid heavy grazing and trampling. Evaluate your riparian area again in two to three years - you should see some improvements.



Photo Credits: Blake Mills, Myrna Pearman, Lorne Fitch, Liz Saunders, Michael Gerrard



Working with producers and communities on riparian awareness

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Cows and Fish Partners

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