

# HEALTHY Shorelines

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## Why the Story

Did you know that only about 1% of the world's water is fresh and about 1/4 of that 1% is in Canada. It is easy to see why water probably will become the most important economic and environmental issue of the 21st Century. The various land use practices occurring in Canada are having an impact on water quantity and quality, fish and wildlife populations, and are raising resource sustainability issues. Linked to water and watersheds are "riparian areas." Riparian areas are strips of land with special vegetation that is commonly found alongside standing and moving water bodies. When riparian areas are healthy and properly functioning they provided many desirable functions in the watershed. These include maintaining water quality and quantity, preventing bank and shoreline erosion, filtering nutrients and pollutants so they don't enter the waterbody, and providing wildlife and fish habitat.

In central and northern Alberta there are tens of thousands of people who live, work and play in riparian areas. Their impacts, combined with natural events like drought, have caused a significant number of riparian areas to become unhealthy and not functioning properly, or at risk of becoming unhealthy. When these changes occur, undesirable outcomes can result, such as increased algae blooms, reduced water quality and quantity from sedimentation and pollution and loss of wildlife and fish species. A balance between providing benefits to riparian area users and the environmental values of riparian areas is required. Critical to achieving this increased riparian area awareness, education, and community planning and action.

What series of steps and actions would help achieve this balance in central and northern Alberta? To find our answer to these questions and the whole story [Click here](#).

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