



Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship is a local grassroots non-profit organization that works with local landowners to help maintain and improve natural areas on their properties and within their communities.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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Photos courtesy of: Lia McKinnon, Alyson Skinner, and Jack Bennest.

Partners in conservation:



CLEAN WATER



Healthy riparian areas help filter pollutants and sediment from runoff, thus cleaning the water.

REDUCE EROSION

Roots help to stabilize banks and decrease soil erosion and siltation.



FLOOD PROTECTION



Roots provide flood protection by slowing and dissipating high stream flows.

WILDLIFE HABITAT

Approximately 85% of Okanagan wildlife species rely on riparian habitats or use them regularly.



HABITAT IN PERIL

75%

3/4 of riparian areas in the Okanagan valley have been lost to agricultural and urban development.

The Okanagan and Shuswap are full of cold, crisp streams and beautiful lakes. These waterways provide clean water for people and agriculture, places for recreation and corridors for wildlife.

Riparian areas are the shoreline strips of land beside streams, rivers, wetlands and other water bodies.

Riparian areas create "highways" for wildlife, providing areas for feeding, hiding, and nesting as well as safe passage through developed areas.

A healthy riparian area has different kinds of trees of varied ages and heights, a thick underbrush layer and other lush vegetation. All these layers form an intricate web of life.

You have a role in protecting this vital resource.



Exclude livestock (and their waste) from open water as much as possible. If an alternate watering point isn't possible, nose-ins are a great option that allow livestock to drink while limiting impact on the shoreline and water.

Make sure to follow manufacturer's recommendations if you are applying pesticides and fertilizers. Each product will tell you how much buffer needs to be left between spray areas and open water.

Planting a buffer of native plants next to the shoreline stabilizes stream banks, reduces erosion, and helps to filter pollutants or harmful bacteria from runoff before it enters our drinking water sources.

Native plants also provide food, areas for nesting, hiding places, and nectar for all sorts of animals and they also help keep water cool for fish.

If you are already caring for the natural spaces and wildlife habitat on your property, contact us to learn how to become a Wildlife Habitat Steward.

It can be tempting to "clean up" your riparian area but often the best thing you can do is leave it alone! Dead standing trees, tangled bushes and fallen logs are important habitats for wildlife and they protect shorelines from erosion.

Learn more about invasive plants, like yellow flag iris and burdock, and find out how you can better manage them.

Activities within 30 metres of a stream must comply with Riparian Areas Regulations. Contact your local government for more information.