

Weekend Course in Riparian Management – October 14-15, 2017

Are you a farmer, rancher, or acreage owner with a “riparian area” – that is, land that borders some sort of water feature? Perhaps you have a stream running through your property, a small pond out back, or even just a wet spot in your cropland. If you do, then the next question is: are you managing your riparian areas to their full potential?

On the weekend of October 14-15th, the Agroforestry and Woodlot Extension Society (AWES) is partnering up with Cows & Fish and Lacombe County to deliver a mini-course that aims to show landowners how to maximize the benefits that their riparian areas provide both to their own operations and to the surrounding watershed. Examples of these benefits include improved water quality, moderation of floods and droughts, erosion reduction, wildlife habitat, forage production for livestock, recreational opportunities, and alternative enterprises that include timber, firewood, fruit, nuts, mushrooms, and medicinal plants.



What else could this riparian area be doing for you? Photo credit: AWES.

The course will begin with a brief background on riparian areas and their importance within the larger watershed, with focus on how riparian restoration can reduce flooding and droughts, improve water quality and reduce erosion. Participants will then get the chance to visit a riparian area in Lacombe County, where they will learn how to conduct a site assessment for determining riparian health and potential to provide functions, goods, and services.



It can be difficult to grow grain in riparian areas, but would other foods do better? Photo credit: Saskatoon Berry Council.

Back in the class, participants will be given maps of their own riparian areas and other tools to help define a vision for their riparian area and a management plan for achieving this vision. AWES and Cows and Fish staff will support this exercise through presentations on potential management practices that landowners may wish to consider (e.g. to provide opportunities for sustainable grazing, fruit or timber production, wildlife habitat, etc.), and by providing one-on-one technical assistance and advice to each participating landowner or family unit. The course will end with participants having the opportunity to share their vision and management plan with other participants to receive further feedback and insight.

In short, this course includes:

- Two full days of instruction/active participation on riparian area assessment, restoration and management. This includes a half-day excursion to a riparian site, weather permitting.

- Printouts of background information and management tools, including a course syllabus, relevant informational factsheets and manuals, laminated maps of participants' properties, and more
- Lunch and snacks/refreshments for both days

The fee for this course is \$20 per participant. This fee has been greatly reduced, as the majority of course costs are being covered by a grant from the Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (WRRP), administered by Alberta Environment and Parks. The primary objective of WRRP is to increase the natural ability of the province's watersheds to reduce the intensity, magnitude, duration and effects of flooding and drought through watershed mitigation measures. Widespread implementation of the riparian restoration and management practices taught in this course has the potential to mitigate flooding and drought throughout the watershed while also providing direct benefits to landowners.

For more information and to register, please contact Jalene Makus with Lacombe County at jmakus@lacombecounty.com or 403-782-8959.