

# Indianfarm Creek Watershed News

Winter 2010

## RIPARIAN REVEALED — THIS RIBBON OF GREEN TIES US ALL TOGETHER

You might refer to them as floodplains or lake shores – these are the areas next to streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, sloughs, and springs that are called **riparian areas**. Riparian areas are portions of the landscape strongly influenced by water, and that water can be flowing, as in streams; standing, as in wetlands; or near the surface, as in springs or seeps. The area between the open water and the surrounding, drier terrestrial area is the riparian area which is sometimes referred to as “ribbons of green”.

Healthy riparian areas are critical pieces of our landscape. We rely on them for clean and abundant water, recreation, agricultural production, fish and wildlife habitat, and the ability to rebound more quickly from droughts or floods. Riparian areas help to keep our water supplies clean, our ranching and farming communities sustainable, and our fish and wildlife populations healthy. Like people, riparian areas need to be healthy to function properly.

Managing riparian areas means managing use of these areas to maintain those key ecological functions, which will ensure we continue to get benefits like clean water, productive land, and wildlife habitat values. Our management of these areas should focus on maintaining healthy, native plant communities, with diverse grasses, broad-leaved plants, shrubs and trees, as well as minimizing bare or compacted soils and

ensuring shores and banks retain their natural shape and contour. By carefully managing when and how intensely we use riparian areas, we can keep them healthy.

These ribbons of green tie us all together – through our need for clean water and a desire for sustainable urban and rural communities. Healthy riparian areas will provide us with these products, services, and benefits over the long term.

For more information of riparian areas and their management contact Michael Gerrand, Riparian Specialist with Cows and Fish at (403) 627-3412 or view the website at [www.cowsandfish.org](http://www.cowsandfish.org).



Fireweed growing in disturbed soil along a riparian area

## You're Invited!

**Indianfarm Creek Watershed Group Meeting**

**January 19<sup>th</sup> 2010, 7:00pm**

**Municipal District Office – 753 Kettles St., Pincher Creek**

**Guest speakers include:**

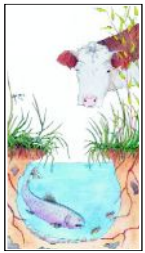
**Michael Gerrand – Cows and Fish “Riparian Health and Assessments”**

**Mike Uchikura – Alberta Conservation Association “Partnership Opportunities”**

**Featuring: “Indianfarm Creek Flight Video – Land Use in Indianfarm Creek Watershed”**

**For more information contact Janelle Villeneuve, 403-381-5867**

**Government  
of Alberta**



## Cows and Fish: Shedding Light on Watershed Health

Do you know which watershed you live in? You can think of a watershed as the sum of many streams, channels, drainages, wetlands, ponds and lakes. It is an area of land that catches and collects rain and snow, and then drains into a wetland, stream, river or lake.

There are nine large watersheds in Alberta, each containing smaller watersheds within them. For example, the South Saskatchewan watershed, which drains east into Hudson Bay, can be divided into many smaller watersheds such as the Indianfarm Creek watershed. Many different communities may exist in one watershed, and through their watershed, people are linked together.

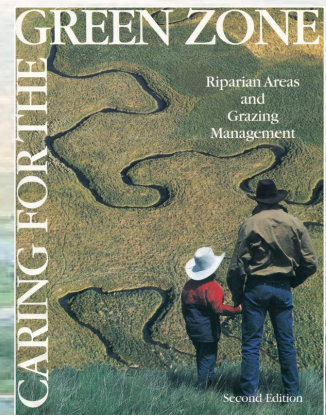
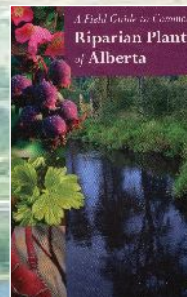
Healthy watersheds and riparian areas - the areas of lush vegetation bordering rivers, streams and lakes – provide good water quality, sustain animal and fish populations, reduce the impact of flooding and support agricultural production.

Watershed and riparian health is greatly affected by what your neighbours do and what activities may be occurring upstream, far from your property. Likewise, management practices on your property impact the areas downstream from you.

Assessing activities and evaluating the condition of riparian areas can help people work together toward improving or maintaining the health of riparian areas in their watershed. When a community works together, the individual efforts pay big dividends on a watershed scale.

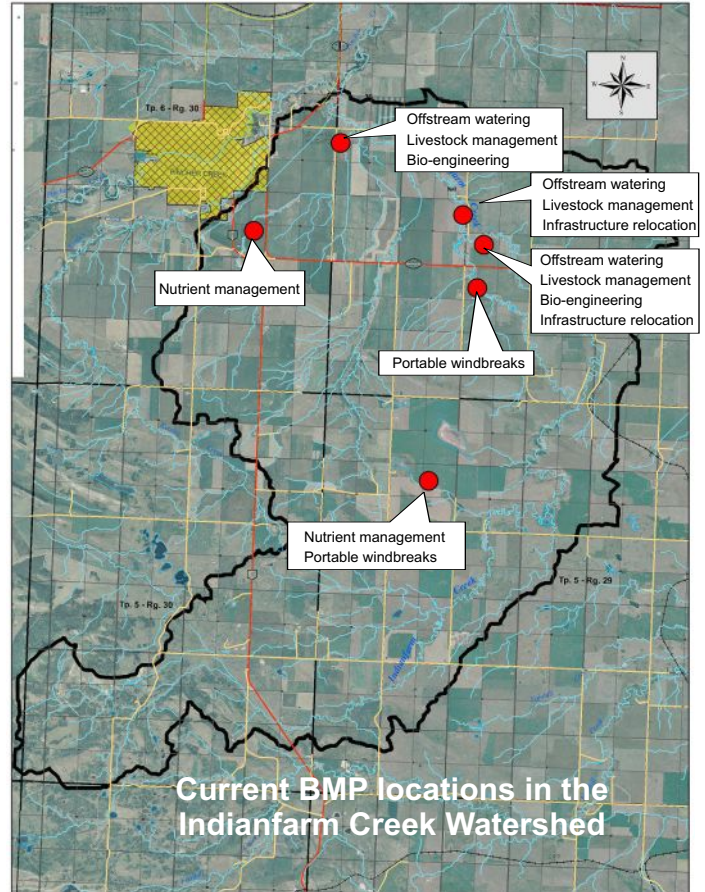
*Cows and Fish is a voluntary stewardship program that works with communities on watershed and riparian awareness and management.* They provide landowners with information on a riparian health assessment process. At the **Indianfarm Creek Watershed Group meeting on January 19<sup>th</sup>**, they will outline what riparian health assessment is, how it is done and how this assessment process may benefit you.

A number of resources are available from Cows and Fish, including 'Caring For the Green Zone' booklets, colourful fact sheets, a field workbook to help determine the health of a riparian area, and a user-friendly website, [www.cowsandfish.org](http://www.cowsandfish.org).



## More BMPs Please!

As part of the overall management of Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development's (ARD's) Indianfarm Creek (IFC) Beneficial Management Practices (BMPs) Evaluation Project, it is recognized that success depends on participation of producers within the IFC watershed. To accomplish the goal of improving water quality and overall stream ecology, it is important to get as many producers within the watershed involved as possible. There are several options available to producers who are interested in participating in stream improvement. Along with ARD's commitment to providing resources and expertise to interested individuals and groups, there is also: Alberta Conservation Association (ACA), which provides funds for habitat protection; ASN grant funds, which will support riparian and watershed group initiatives; Cows and Fish; and the Southwestern Alberta Conservation Partnership; among others. ARD has been working in the IFC watershed for 3 years and we are seeing success with livestock management, grazing timing, off stream watering, and bio-engineering. We expect that with more BMPs and time, there will be an improvement in the quality of water in IFC and the overall stability of the banks and riparian area along the stream channel. The adjoining map indicates the BMPs that have been implemented and their location on Indianfarm Creek.

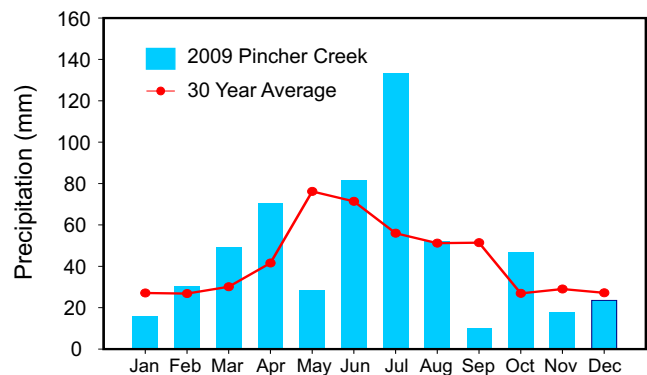
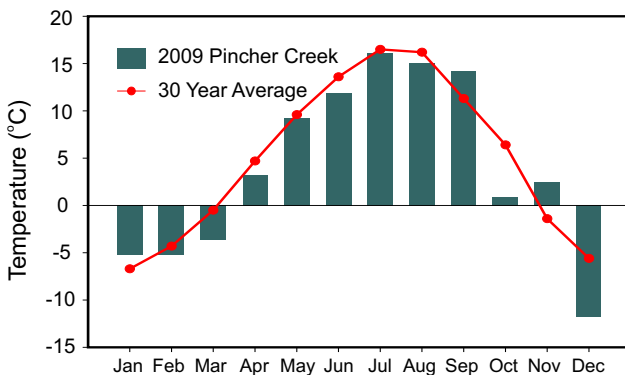


**Interested?! You can help!! Please contact Clair Fitzpatrick (403)381-5894 with BMP ideas for your land.**

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## 2009 Weather Update

According to Environment Canada weather data, most months in 2009 were cooler than the 30-yr average. October and December were especially cooler as they were more than 5°C below the average. January, September and November were the only months with average monthly temperature above the 30-yr average. It was a variable year for precipitation in Pincher Creek in 2009. Some monthly totals were above the 30-yr average (ie. July) and some were below the average (ie. Sept). Overall, the total annual precipitation for 2009 (560.5 mm) was slightly greater than the 30-yr average total annual precipitation (514.9 mm).



# Nutrient Beneficial Management Practices Evaluation Project

The Nutrient Beneficial Management Practices Evaluation Project is a project conducted by Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development in partnership with local agricultural producers and funding partners. The purpose of this 5-year study is to evaluate the environmental and economic effectiveness of nutrient and livestock BMPs in the Indianfarm and Whelp Creek watersheds as well as at two irrigated fields near Picture Butte.

## Project Update 2009

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development completed the third year of this five year project in 2009. This concludes the pre-BMP phase of the project with BMPs now implemented at six sites in the watershed. A seventh site will be implemented in 2010. Collection of data on weather, soil, water and land use will continue through the next two post-BMP years. Data from 2009 are currently being processed and evaluated for the 2009 Progress Report, expected to be out by April 2010. This report will be available on the internet at [www.agric.gov.ab.ca](http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca) (type "Nutrient Beneficial Management Practices Evaluation Project" in the 'search' option).



BMPs in Indianfarm Creek

Many thanks to the participating producers for your interest and cooperation. Also, thanks to the project partners for the technical and financial support, including:



Agriculture and  
Agri-Food Canada

Agriculture et  
Agroalimentaire Canada

