

Riparian Restoration Demonstrations in the Peace River Region

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Key Points

- Project update and overview
- Trees and shrubs as tools for riparian restoration
- Incentive Programs and Strategic Partnerships
- Riparian Health Assessments
- Next steps

Body

Trees and shrubs are an essential part of a healthy watershed. The Peace Region is experiencing deforestation along many creeks and rivers on private land. The goal of this two-year project is to work with organizations such as Cows & Fish, AESA Rural Extension Staff, ACA and municipalities on the establishment and planting of trees in riparian areas. This is a gap in many riparian restoration projects because trees and shrubs are often under emphasized when they are actually key factors in riparian health. Their deep roots filter ground and surface water, stabilize banks as the rest of the tree provides shade and habitat for wildlife. This project does not promote the exclusion of cattle from riparian forests but rather complements a rotational grazing system. The Alberta Woodlot Extension Program intends to work in the Peace Region to encourage the restoration of riparian areas to help improve local watersheds. The project will develop landscape level awareness through the afforestation of several sites that will then be used as community demonstrations.

In spring of 2007 five new riparian restoration demonstrations were established in the Peace Region. Projects were established in five of the thirteen municipalities with the most northern project being near Fort Vermilion along the Peace River. Each site had a riparian health assessment conducted by Cows and Fish. The goal of the projects is to educate producers on how to reclaim, reforest and restore degraded riparian areas using trees. Workshops held in both spring and fall to educate local folks about regional projects, riparian health and management tools for both crop and cattle producers. Field days toured the various riparian projects and gave partners, cooperators and local residents a chance to learn about riparian restoration. Agriculture and AgriFood Canada sponsored these projects through both Greencover and Prairie Shelterbelt Programs.

This 20-minute presentation outlines the projects that were setup and what we learned during the process. We will explain why trees are effective tools for riparian restoration and what species are effective. We will discuss the challenges faced and what incentive programs are beneficial to landowners. Also, plan to discuss ideas on building partnerships with industry that can be big supporters and contributors to community projects such as these. Would also like to discuss what we feel the next steps are once

these demonstrations are established. Where do we go from here? How do we use these demonstration tools effectively?

Conclusion

These projects are excellent tools to teach landowners about afforestation and riparian issues. They have raised the level of awareness in many municipalities on the issues surrounding deforestation of riparian areas. The demonstrations show residents what can be done, what incentive programs exist, where to get technical advice and how they can setup a project.