

Detailed Soil & Site Descriptions of Riparian Habitats in the Central Parkland & the Grassland Natural Regions

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Riparian areas provide numerous environmental, economic and social benefits, including recharging aquifers, filtering nutrients and sediment from water, providing habitats for fish and wildlife, storing water, and minimizing erosion. Detailed descriptions of 90 riparian plant communities (including wetland, herbaceous, shrub and tree types) are available for approximately 475 riparian sites in the Grassland, Montane, and Parkland Natural Subregions of Alberta. However, these descriptions currently do not include detailed information on soil and landscape characteristics.

Riparian areas with similar or identical plant communities can have varying soil, parent material and groundwater conditions. These conditions may have a strong influence on the selection of appropriate land management practices.

Soils and parent materials have been described in detail at 180 locations in the Grassland, Montane, and Parkland Natural Subregions of Alberta. Two locations are described for each of the 90 plant community-types. Descriptions began in 2005 and were completed in the fall of 2007. Reporting will include relevant discussion about the soils, parent materials and issues that affect management at each of the 90 plant community types. Reporting will be included in Plant Community Guides for each of the three Natural Subregions. Improved characterization of riparian soils will allow plant ecologists and soil scientists to integrate descriptions of soils and plant communities for a more complete landscape perspective. This work is being funded by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, through the Greencover Program.