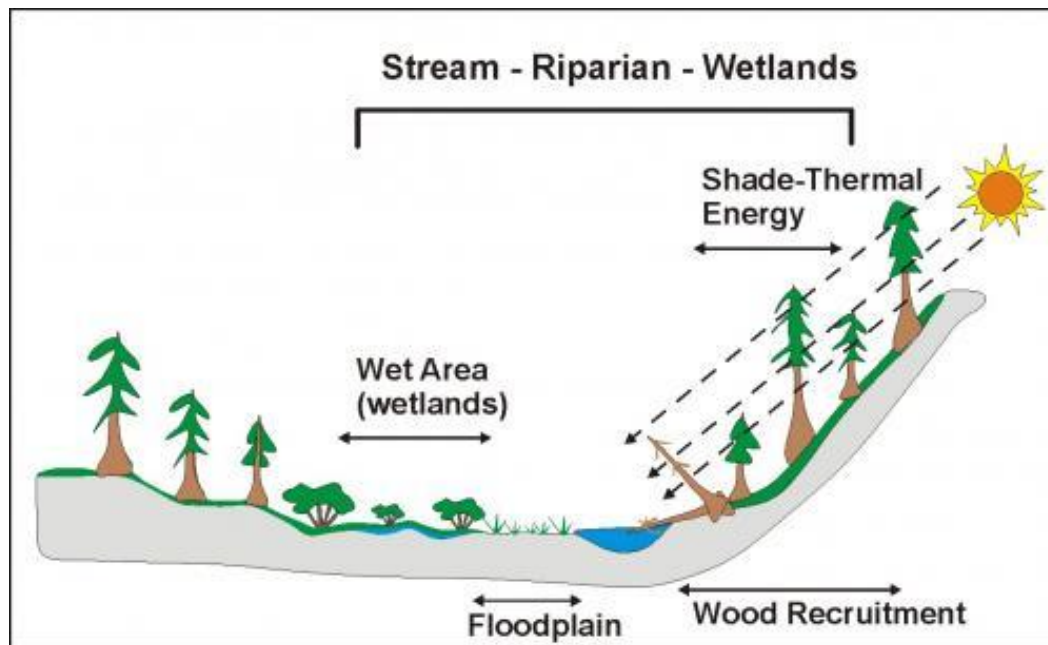


## Ferry Conservation District Announces New Grant Program to Fund Riparian Protection Projects

Do you live alongside a stream or a lake? If so, you have riparian areas on your property. According to the Alberta Riparian Habitat Management Society: “Riparian areas are the lands adjacent to streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands, where the vegetation and soils are among the most productive and valuable of all landscape types ...”



A healthy riparian zone serves many purposes.

In a natural ecosystem, unaffected by human activity, healthy riparian buffers are the natural feature creating a transition zone between a stream or lake and the drier upland. A balance exists between the stream and the riparian buffer area. Elevated groundwater and nutrient-rich silt deposits from periodic floodwaters make the riparian zone a very good medium for the growth of grasses, woody shrubs and small and large trees. The roots of these plants anchor the banks, protecting them from eroding under the strong influence of annual high water and periodic large floods. Occasionally a super flood will erode banks and even carve a new riverbed, but eventually, equilibrium will be reached again, with high water depositing nutrients and the resultant healthy plant growth holding the banks in place.

Though riparian areas in the western United States make up only about 1% of the landscape, they play a disproportionately important role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem. With reduced erosion, the stream water stays clearer. Riparian plants, especially trees, provide shade, and, in turn, keep the water cool. Trees from the riparian buffer eventually fall into the stream, slowing the current (reducing bank erosion) and providing habitat (pools and protection) for fish and other animals. The riparian area, with its rich vegetation, provides excellent habitat for many terrestrial animals and birds.

Humans, too, benefit from healthy riparian zones. Water quality is enhanced. Not only do the stable stream banks contribute less sediment to the stream, but the riparian zone filters nutrients and other pollutants out of the runoff from adjacent uplands. This improves fisheries, swimming, public water supplies, and general aesthetic value of property. Reduced flow during high water also correlates to less property damage.

Unfortunately, humans have put undue pressure on these important riparian areas, upsetting the equilibrium. Many land use practices, developed before humans understood the importance of riparian areas, have had a detrimental effect on them. Agricultural practices have often involved clearing vegetation right to the stream bank, or allowing livestock direct access to the body of water, resulting in degraded banks and nutrient loading. Logging has followed suit. Until recent years, trees were often removed very close to streams. In populated areas, residential and commercial development has also impacted the riparian zone, especially around lakes and along bigger streams. Attracted to the water by its beauty, many landowners have removed riparian vegetation to improve the water view. Without the buffer, storm runoff more easily carries fertilizers and pollutants from lawns and roads into the lake or stream.



Streambank erosion resulting from removal of riparian vegetation.



Large woody debris being buried in bank to stabilize it.

Over the years, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Ferry Conservation District (FCD) have provided information, as well as technical and financial assistance, for numerous conservation projects which have focused on riparian restoration, such as stream bank stabilization, riparian planting, exclusion fencing, etc. to concerned landowners.

Presently, the NRCS is accepting applications for its Environmental Quality Implementation Program (EQIP) grants, which provide cost-share funds for selected conservation projects, including riparian work. To apply for the EQIP program, call Patrice Beckwith at (509)775-3473, ext. 102.

### **The Water Quality in Ferry County (WQFC) Grant**

The FCD has recently received a grant from the Washington Department of Ecology to help fund riparian projects along all Ferry County bodies of water. The Water Quality in Ferry County (WQFC) grant will provide cost-share funds on a competitive basis to landowners with projects along the Sanpoil, Kettle and Upper Columbia (adjacent to Ferry County) Rivers, and Curlew Lake, as well as all tributaries. Landowners may contact the FCD to discuss proposals and to apply for cost-share assistance. Qualifying projects will be considered for funding.

For information about the WQFC, visit the office (84 E. Delaware, Republic, above the Credit Union), call (509-775-3473) or visit the FCD website ([www.ferrycd.org](http://www.ferrycd.org)). The Ferry Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service are non-regulatory agencies. Our services are available to all without discrimination.