

Target Backgrounder: Protecting Riparian Habitats

Cowichan Watershed Board Meeting January 2012

Why a Target for Riparian Habitats?

- Riparian areas border lakes, rivers, streams and other bodies of water.



Why a Target for Riparian Habitats?

- Cover a small % of the watershed BUT are critical for ecological and human wellbeing:
 - Filter sediments & enhance water quality,
 - Stabilize banks & mitigate flooding & erosion impacts,
 - Store water & contribute to late season flow & aquifer recharge,
 - Cool water temperatures & support fish populations,
 - Provide habitat/food and corridors for fish/wildlife

Why a Target for Riparian Habitats?

- Riparian habitats in the watershed are significantly impacted by :
 - Storm water management
 - Transportation corridors
 - Vegetation removal
 - Sewage/septic fields
 - Agricultural practices
 - Invasive species



Why a Target for Riparian Habitats?

- Riparian habitats in the watershed are not well protected because:
 - Current regulatory frame work is diffuse, complicated, and poorly enforced
 - Much of the watershed is private land
 - Limited public understanding (valuing) of the importance of riparian habitat

Riparian Habitats: Proposed Target

We want to protect and enjoy Stream, River and Lake front habitats

- X% increase in area of riparian habitats protected in watershed by 2021.
- Y% riparian habitats restored/enhanced and at or in process of achieving healthy condition by 2021.

Action Plan – Increasing Protected Riparian Area

June 2012: Inventory/classify status of riparian habitat

September 2012: Develop acquisition plan

- Determine the feasibility, alternatives & **set priorities for securing lands.**
- Confirm appropriate target.
- Establish a formal partnership to spearhead the initiative.

March 2013: Seek/secure funds

Ongoing to 2021: Execute plan

Action plan – Restoring Damaged Riparian Areas

June 2012 – Inventory and classify status of riparian habitat

September 2012: Develop restoration plan

- Identify practical restoration options & set priorities for restoration/enhancement
- Determine appropriate target
- Establish formal partnership to spearhead initiative

March 2013 and ongoing to 2021:

- Seek/secure multi-year restoration funding based on priorities.
- Ongoing plan implementation

Key Ingredients for Moving Forward

- **Strong partnerships and collaboration:**
 - Cowichan Tribes, and Local Govts.
 - Cowichan Estuary Environmental Management Steering Committee
 - Ministry of Agriculture, BCMOE, MFLNRO, MOTI
 - Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada
 - Private Forest Companies
 - NGOs e.g. Living Rivers GB/VI, Nature Conservancy Canada, Ducks Unlimited, Cowichan Community Land Trust, other local NGOs,
 - Cowichan agricultural community
- **Leadership**
- **Long term commitment**
- **Significant investments (fund raising)**