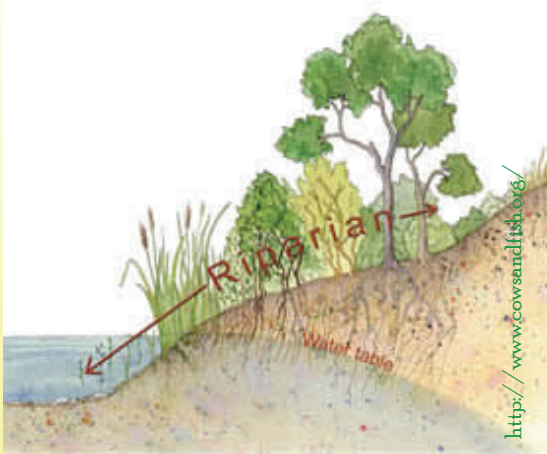


## What are riparian areas and why do they matter?



Riparian areas are thin strips of land beside streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands where the soil and vegetation are influenced by the presence of water. Although riparian areas only make up a small fraction of the landscape, they are the most productive ecosystem. When properly maintained, healthy riparian areas provide many benefits to people and wildlife.

- Trap sediment
- Reduce erosion of stream banks
- Reduce flood damage
- Promote biodiversity by providing ideal habitat
- Create competition for invasive plants species
- Store and filter water for increased water quality
- Improve fish and aquatic habitat by creating cover and shade

## What is the Municipality doing to maintain riparian area health and control weeds?

Currently the Municipality is working to eliminate prohibited noxious and noxious weeds in riparian areas. This has been accomplished through hand pulling, and using a selective water safe herbicide treatment. Contractors and even hard-working volunteers are all part of this team. As well, by planting native species in the riparian area along Lyons Creek and Crowsnest River in Blairmore. The willows and other planted native species will help stabilize the banks and put weeds at the disadvantage by providing shade. Already a successful trial with live-staking willows has been accomplished on the new trail system.

This work has been made possible through a grant from the Alberta Conservation Association received by the Crowsnest Conservation Society while working with the Municipality.

### Further Information

[www.town.crowsnestpass.ab.ca/home](http://www.town.crowsnestpass.ab.ca/home)  
[www.ab-conservation.com/go/default/](http://www.ab-conservation.com/go/default/)  
[www.crowsnestconservation.ca/](http://www.crowsnestconservation.ca/)  
[www.cowsandfish.org/index.html](http://www.cowsandfish.org/index.html)

### Contact

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Email: [agfieldman@crowsnestpass.com](mailto:agfieldman@crowsnestpass.com)



By Samantha Dunbar



# What are weeds?

A weed is a plant out of place (an invasive species) that is generally introduced from another country or region and has few limiting factors such as growing conditions, disease and predation from animals. Weeds are able to outcompete native species (the opposite of a weed, it belongs here) and have the potential to harm the environment. Usually weeds are spread by humans but also can be transported by wind, water, wildlife and livestock.

There are two important classifications of weeds in Alberta, "Prohibited Noxious" and "Noxious". Prohibited noxious weeds by law are required to be "destroyed" as they are highly aggressive and are uncommon in Alberta. Noxious weeds are unfortunately common in many regions and are required to be "controlled" to limit their abundance and prevent further spread.



Oxeye Daisy  
Noxious

Spotted Knapweed  
Prohibited Noxious



Lyons Creek riparian area in poor health.

## How improper management harms riparian areas

To maintain a riparian area there needs to be a healthy plant community which has deep, fibrous roots that keep the bank intact by stabilizing the soil. Weeds can takeover these useful native plants where conditions are less desirable (short cut grass, pollutants, poor soil and direct sunlight). Often weeds do not have the same supportive root systems and therefore weed infestation will most likely result in riparian area deterioration. Weeds can be used as an indicator of riparian area health.

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