

Riparian Land Conservation and Management Project Team Terms of Reference

Approved by the Alberta Water Council on June 16, 2011

CONTEXT:

- The Riparian Land Conservation and Management initiative originated from a statement of opportunity (SOO) brought forward to the Council by the Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils (WPAC) sector. The Council identified this initiative as a potential Council project at the October 2010 board meeting and established a Working Group to further define the scope of a potential project.
- Riparian lands are among the most productive and valuable of all landscape types in terms of species richness and ecological function. Healthy riparian lands are also more resilient when faced with environmental stresses (such as climate). Despite this, pressure continues to grow for both the health and quantity of some riparian lands in Alberta. Recognizing the value of riparian lands, many organizations work to promote riparian land health and function and overall protection, but still face many challenges. There is an opportunity to improve riparian management in Alberta and the SOO proposed that the Council develop provincial level recommendations to improve the conservation and management of riparian lands at all scales.
- The Council uses a multi-stakeholder consensus based process to provide recommendations to advance the three goals of the *Water for Life* strategy. This project aligns with advancing the three goals and requires the Council's approach for effective cross-sector solutions.
- The project team will operate in a manner that is consistent with the rules, policies and procedures adopted by the Alberta Water Council, including the use of consensus to make decisions in a multi-stakeholder process.

STRATEGIC INTENT (GOAL):

The purpose of this initiative is to enhance knowledge and provide recommendations for effective conservation and management of riparian lands in support of *Water for Life* goals.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1) Develop a definition for riparian lands.
- 2) Document the current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship in Alberta and the riparian management and stewardship "best practices" (policy, practices and procedures) of other jurisdictions.
- 3) Evaluate the current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship against the needs of all relevant sectors and propose recommendations for improving riparian land conservation and management in Alberta.

KEY TASKS:

The project team will:

- Build a work plan and operate according to its timelines and tasks.
- Provide regular updates to the Council.
- Prepare a consensus definition of riparian land to facilitate a shared understanding of the definition and its intent by reviewing other working definitions and their application and/or intents and present that definition to Council for approval.
- Develop a glossary of terms related to the project team's work.
- Engage a qualified consultant to complete a literature review and sector discussions for the "state of" knowledge on:

- riparian land health and function within Alberta from a broad overview perspective, such as an annotated bibliography at sub-basin level or higher (ie: state of watershed reports).
- existing policy, practices and procedures of riparian land conservation and management implemented in Alberta and other jurisdictions, that include:
 - methodologies for delineating riparian lands
 - criteria for defining riparian health and function
 - tools for riparian land conservation and management taking into account social, ecological, and economic factors
- Work with the consultant to contribute relevant sector specific information and known data sources.
- Invite sectors to provide an overview of riparian lands in relation to their sector, specifically outlining management strategies, challenges or issues.
- Identify successes and gaps in riparian knowledge and management from Alberta and other jurisdictions.
- Using the consultant report and the sector information, make recommendations to the Council on:
 - a definition for riparian lands in Alberta.
 - priority actions to fill identified knowledge and management needs/gaps.

TIMELINES and DELIVERABLES:

- Prepare and present for approval a definition for riparian lands.....October 2011
- Present the results of the consultant’s report on the “state of” knowledge.....March 2012
- Draft final report recommendations.....June 2012
- Final report recommendations.....October 2012

MEMBERSHIP:

Industry:

- Cropping
- Forest
- Irrigation
- Livestock
- Oil and Gas

Non-Governmental Organizations:

- Cows and Fish
- Environmental NGO
- Fish Habitat Conservation
- Lake Environment Conservation
- Wetland Conservation
- Watershed Planning and Advisory Councils

Government:

- Large Urban
- Small Urban
- Rural
- Federal

Government of Alberta and Provincial Authorities:

- Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
- Alberta Environment

BUDGET:

The Working Group estimates a total budget of \$ 139,900 to complete the project, broken down as follows:

Core Funding Costs (covered by Alberta Water Council):

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| Stakeholder support | \$ 70,400 |
| Hosting | \$ 4,500 |
| Communications support | \$ 5,000 |

Project Funding Costs (covered by stakeholders):

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| Report on current state of riparian lands, management, and stewardship in Alberta and the riparian management and stewardship “best practices” (policy, practices and procedures) of other jurisdictions | \$ 60,000 |
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