



NEWS RELEASE

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Conserving and managing the valuable lands adjacent to rivers, lakes and wetlands

Edmonton ... As development intensifies and land uses change, Alberta's riparian lands will continue to be lost and degraded without a focused effort to conserve and manage them. Immediately adjacent to rivers and lakes, these lands support productive and diverse animal and plant communities, play an important role in flood and drought mitigation, and are a valuable component of the landscape. Healthy riparian lands provide environmental, economic, cultural and recreational benefits throughout the province.

A new report by the Alberta Water Council makes 13 recommendations to more effectively conserve and manage riparian lands. "All levels of government as well as those who use riparian areas on Alberta's public and private land have a role in managing and influencing outcomes. Alberta has many successful riparian initiatives, but what's missing is a broad provincial vision and strategy that sets measurable goals and monitors progress toward achieving them," says Council Executive Director, Gord Edwards.

The *Riparian Land Conservation and Management* report notes that a great deal of good work has been done, and the ongoing efforts to integrate watershed and land use planning are compatible with improved riparian land conservation and management. The report identifies specific challenges in protecting the health of riparian lands and recommends how these challenges could be addressed by the Government of Alberta. Examples include:

- Develop a provincial vision and outcomes for riparian land conservation and management that will allow policies, strategies and initiatives work towards a common goal.
- Adopt accepted methodologies and use them to map riparian lands throughout the province on an ongoing basis.
- Coordinate and collaborate with municipalities to ensure consistent decision making with respect to riparian land conservation and management.
- Share knowledge and information to increase understanding of riparian lands.
- Develop integrated management solutions at all scales.

The report also proposes timelines for implementation, aiming for action on all 13 recommendations within the next five years. The lead agency for implementing the recommendations, Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development, participated in preparing the report, along with many other key departments and organizations that use and manage riparian lands.

For more information on the Alberta Water Council and the report, visit www.awchome.ca.

Established in 2004, the Alberta Water Council is a multi-stakeholder partnership with 24 members from governments, industry, and non-government organizations. Its primary task is to monitor and steward

implementation of Alberta's Water for Life strategy and to champion the achievement of the strategy's three outcomes of a safe, secure drinking water supply, healthy aquatic ecosystems, and reliable, quality water supplies for a sustainable economy.

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For more information, please contact:

Alesha Hill, Project Manager, Alberta Water Council, (780) 644-7377