Get to know your backyard stream

If you live next to a creek, stream, or wetland, you are very lucky to enjoy a little bit of nature in your own backyard! The privilege of living alongside a stream comes with the responsibility of understanding how to manage your property to protect the health of our most precious natural resource.

Healthy streams are dynamic - they change with the seasons and contain features like **pools**, **riffles**, and **runs** that provide habitat for aquatic life.

The vegetated area along either side of a stream is called a **riparian area.** Riparian areas are important transition zones between the land and the water. The trees and plants within a riparian area shade the water, provide food and habitat for fish and wildlife, reduce streambank erosion, filter stormwater run-off and protect water quality.

As a streamside landowner, you are uniquely positioned to positively impact the health of your stream and watershed for the longterm common benefit of communities, fish, and wildlife.

Before you develop or do work within a riparian area, contact your local government for information on bylaws and regulations. Learn more at Province of British Columbia Riparian Areas Protection Regulation (RAPR):

https://www2.gov.bc.ca/ gov/content/environment/ plants-animals-ecosystems/ fish/aquatic-habitat- management/riparian- areas-regulation

Learn more at **rdn.bc.ca/ streamside-landowners**

The vision of the RDN's **Drinking Water & Watershed Protection** program is for healthy, safe, and resilient water resources in the region.

Discover more at dwwp.ca

REGIONAL DISTRICT OF NANAIMO

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Streamside Landowners Guide

How to care for your backyard creek or stream

Drinking Water & Watershed Protection

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www.rdn.bc.ca

Maintaining a healthy riparian area in your backyard

Within a stream is a complex ecosystem that is habitat for insects, fish, and wildlife. The riparian area on either side of a stream, creek, or edges of wetland is vital for the health of freshwater ecosystems and watersheds.
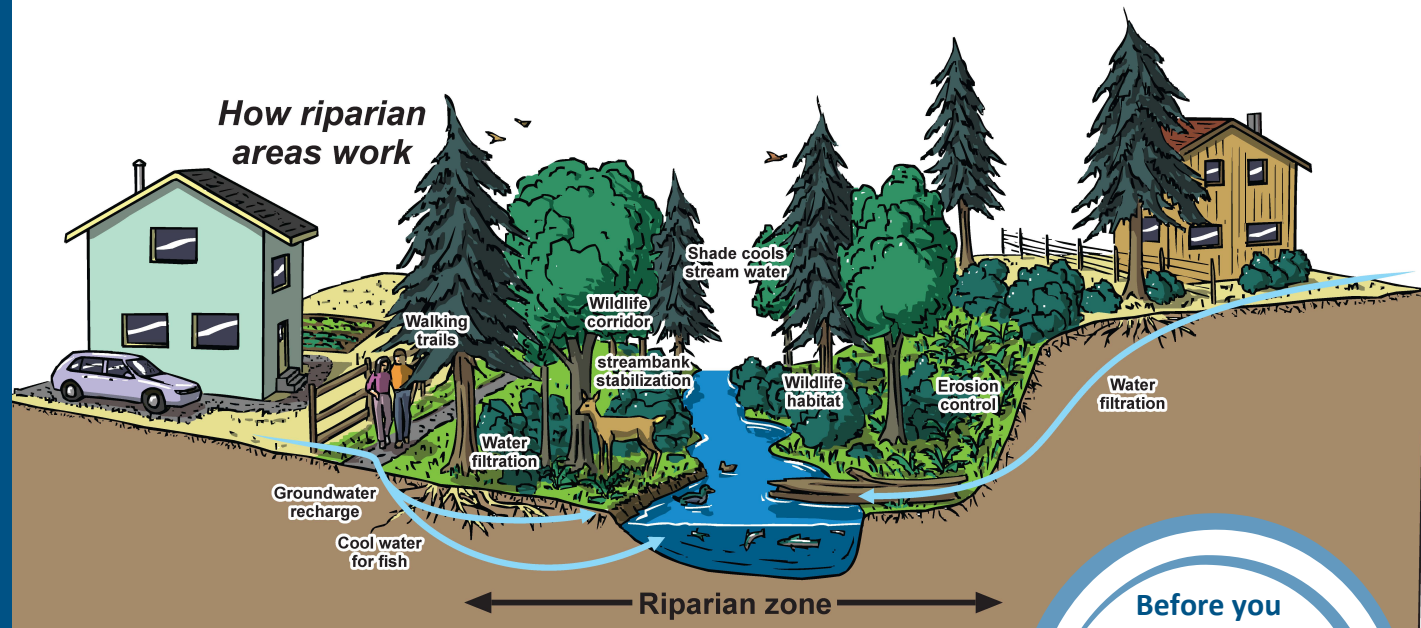
Being a steward to your backyard or neighbourhood stream means working to maintain healthy and intact riparian areas to ensure a safe and reliable supply of freshwater for your family, community, and the environment. Here's how:

Protect & Plant Native Vegetation

Native plants provide habitat for aquatic and terrestrial species, encourage beneficial insects, and protect watersheds from the spread of invasive species. In riparian areas, native vegetation helps to shade and reduce stream water temperature, filter stormwater and increase water quality, and protect streambanks from erosion. Retain and protect existing native vegetation within riparian areas. Plant native species in areas with little or no vegetation.

Control & Remove Invasive Species

Remove or control the spread of invasive species. Invasive species compete with native species and negatively impact stream health.

How riparian areas work

- Shade cools stream water
- Walking trails
- Wildlife corridor
- streambank stabilization
- Wildlife habitat
- Erosion control
- Water filtration
- Water filtration
- Groundwater recharge
- Cool water for fish

← **Riparian zone** →

Steward your Stream
for your family, neighbours, community, and environment

Streams are complex ecosystems

Even small actions upstream can have a big impact further downstream

Manage & Filter Stormwater Run-off

Hard surfaces, such as roads, sidewalks, patios and pathways, prevent rainwater from infiltrating into the soils below and recharging groundwater. Rainwater is instead shed across the land surface as **stormwater run-off** where it may pick up debris, pollutants, and pet waste as it runs directly into a watercourse where it may impact water quality and fish habitat. Turn your yard into a 'sponge' - one that slows water flow and filters run-off by adding topsoil, compost, or mulch, or by creating **raingardens** or **bioswales**. Use safe alternatives to harmful pesticides and herbicides.

Compost & Safely Dispose of Garden Waste

Never dump yard or garden waste into a riparian area or stream. Dumped garden waste may smother native vegetation, impact stream water quality, and introduce invasive species to the ecosystem.

Manage People, Pets & Livestock

Keep a stream wild and healthy by refraining from building pathways, bridges, and structures within a riparian area and managing access for pets and livestock. Refrain from allowing waste to enter a stream.

Before you develop land near a waterway, be sure to check with your local & provincial authorities for rules and regulations

How you manage your land directly impacts stream health, fish, and wildlife

- Protect & plant native vegetation
- Control & remove invasive species
- Manage & filter stormwater run-off
- Compost & safely dispose of garden waste
- Manage people, pets & livestock