

## **B.9.0 CONSERVATION**

### **B.9.1 Riparian**

Riparian ecosystems typically exemplify a rich and diverse vegetative mosaic reflecting the influence of available surface water such as rivers, streams, bogs, seeps, wet meadows, swamps and lakes (Appendix 24.4). Riparian habitats are extremely important to the maintenance of healthy aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, which in turn influence community health and the local economy. The inherently high productivity and diverse structural and functional attributes of riparian ecosystems contribute to the movement, foraging and reproductive requirements for many indigenous and migratory species of invertebrates, reptiles, amphibians, mammals and birds.

#### **Issues:**

- International water values need to be retained
- Water quality and quantity in community and domestic watersheds are influenced by riparian condition
- Increasing industrial, commercial and public access may significantly impact riparian areas
- Riparian areas may be negatively impacted as a result of the following activities:
  - Industrial, commercial recreation and public access
  - Livestock grazing
  - Forest health management
  - Hydro-electric development
  - Recreation development and use
- Riparian conservation plans are lacking
- The regional lake classification has not been completed
- Wetland seeps are extremely important for wildlife and often contain unique plant communities
- There are potential impacts of private land management on adjacent and downstream riparian values
- No regional monitoring program for riparian areas exists

#### **Intent:**

- Maintain riparian habitat in a proper functioning condition (see Best management practices)
- Manage recreational access and development (see Section B.7.1) in order to maintain riparian habitat effectiveness and proper functioning condition
- Employ management principles that maintain habitat effectiveness including:
  - riparian habitat integrity and continuity
  - terrain, bank and channel stability
  - water quality, quantity and timing of flow
  - the natural distribution, movement, foraging and reproduction opportunities of wildlife species and populations that depend on riparian ecosystems

- structural attributes and species composition which contribute to landscape-level habitat diversity and proper functioning condition characteristics (Appendix 24.4)
- Manage riparian ecosystems for late succession deciduous, coarse woody debris attributes and coniferous old growth, through the application of biodiversity management objectives (Appendix 24.4)
- Livestock use of riparian areas will be in compliance with existing legislation and regulations

**Resource objectives:**

**Objective 9.1.1**

**Riparian Management Zones and Riparian Reserve Zones are assigned for rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands in the plan area as per the *Forest Practices Code* and the *Forest and Range Practices Act* and associated regulations.**

**Objective 9.1.2**

**Within the Flathead Enhanced Riparian Zones in the plan area (Map B.9.1.1):**

- **Maintain existing locations of roads and river crossings**
- **New road construction, except for temporary roads, skid trails or access trails necessary for approved resource development and extraction, is not permitted**
- **New river crossings are limited to temporary bridges with no more than two temporary bridges at any one time**
- **Roads, skid trails or access trails constructed after July 1, 2003 and no longer needed will be fully reclaimed**
- **New facility construction or expansion of existing facilities is not permitted**

**Objective 9.1.3**

**Within Riparian Management Zones for rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands in the plan area:**

- **River and stream crossings will be kept to the minimum required for resource development and extraction**
- **New or expanded facility construction is not permitted**
- **Forest and range management activities will be consistent with existing legislation and regulations for riparian management**

**Objective 9.1.4**

**Within Riparian Reserve Zones for rivers, streams, lakes and wetlands in the plan area:**

- **New road construction except for access to required river and stream crossings and temporary trails required for forest health or riparian habitat and stream enhancement is not permitted**

- **River and stream crossings will be kept to the minimum required for resource development and extraction**
- **Roads, skid trails or access trails constructed after July 1, 2003 and no longer needed will be fully reclaimed**
- **New or expanded facility construction is not permitted**
- **Forest and range management activities will be consistent with existing legislation and regulations for riparian management**

### **Objective 9.1.5**

**Until replaced by enhanced riparian zone mapping, backcountry river corridors within the plan area are defined as 500 metres either side of the Wigwam River, 500 metres east of the Bull River and 500 metres west of the Elk River. Within the backcountry river corridors:**

- **Existing roads and river crossings locations will be maintained**
- **New road construction except for temporary roads, skid trails or access trails necessary for approved resource development and extraction are not permitted**
- **New river crossings are limited to temporary bridges with no more than two temporary bridges at any one time**
- **Roads, skid trails or access trails constructed after July 1, 2003 and no longer needed will be fully reclaimed**
- **New or expanded facility construction is not permitted**

### **Best management practices:**

- *Riparian Management Area Guidebook (MOF, December 1995)*
- Temporary river-crossing sites on the main stem of the Bull, Elk, Flathead and Wigwam rivers will be designed such that the use of those sites as river fords is discouraged.

### **Economic benefits and opportunities:**

- Resident and guided fishing
- Healthy ecosystems and communities
- Resident hunting and viewing
- Big game guide-outfitting business

### **Measures of success:**

- The viability of riparian ecosystems is maintained
- Proper functioning condition of riparian habitat is sustained
- Compliance and respect for access management plans generated through public and government processes is maintained
- Functional and diversified wildlife species and populations exist within riparian zones
- Reduced riparian use conflicts and an increased degree of certainty for environmental, social, industrial and commercial interests

### **Maps:**

B.9.1.1 Flathead Enhanced Riparian Zones

E.9.1.1 Flathead Enhanced Riparian Zones