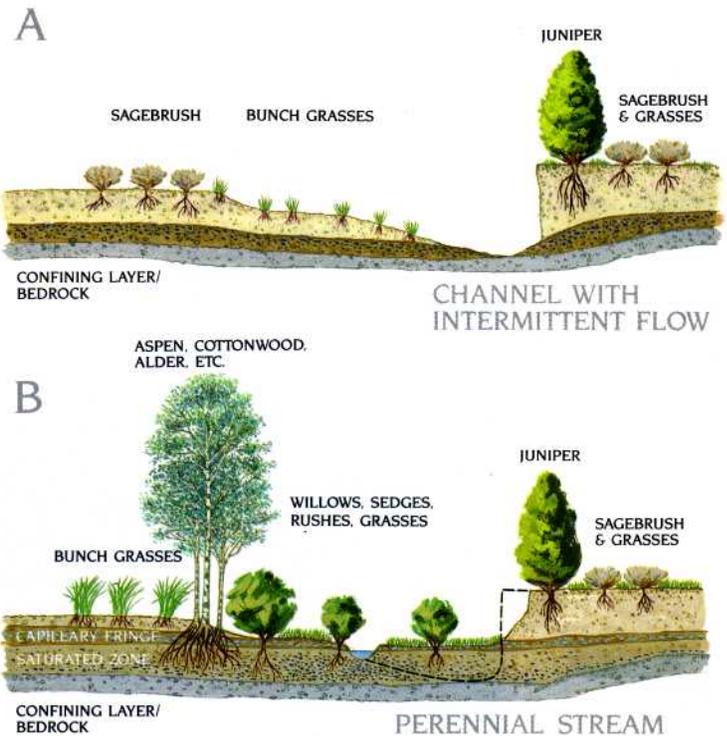


Riparian areas in good condition slowly release water to stream channels, thus increasing seasonal quantity and quality of water.

The inherent productivity of riparian lands, the proximity of water, and relatively gentle terrain attract a variety of human activities. Consequently, riparian areas are the most modified land type in the West. Riparian functions and values have been

widely and severely impacted by cultivation, road building, mining, urbanization, logging, and damming of rivers. Livestock grazing — the focus of this document — has had the most geographically extensive effects. The resulting economic and environmental costs have captured the attention of growing numbers of people concerned about the long-term productivity of western watersheds.



General Characteristics and Functions of Riparian Areas

A Degraded Riparian Area (top)

- Little vegetation to protect and stabilize streambanks and shade stream
- Lowered water table and saturated zone, reduced subsurface water storage
- Reduced or no summer streamflow
- Warm water in summer and icing in winter
- Poor habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms
- Poor habitat for wildlife
- Reduced amount and quality of livestock forage

B Restored Riparian Area (bottom)

- Diverse vegetation and root systems protect and stabilize streambanks; stream shaded
- Elevated water table and saturated zone, increased subsurface water storage
- Increased summer streamflow
- Cooler water in summer, reduced icing in winter
- Improved habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms
- Improved habitat for wildlife
- Increased quantity and quality of livestock forage