



Why Are Streams Important to You?

Rivers and streams are important in many ways to Montana and the people who live here.

Streams provide:

- water for irrigation and domestic use
- stock water
- recreational opportunities
- fisheries

Land along streams contributes:

- shelter, shade and forage for livestock
- sites for timber production
- wildlife habitat
- streambank cover for fish
- protection from erosion
- a buffer against flood waters

Why Are Streamside Areas So Valuable?

- Well-managed streambanks with healthy vegetation provide a buffer between adjoining land and the stream. Shrubs, trees, and grasses growing along the banks of streams and rivers are natural protectors of land and water.
- Taller vegetation shades the water and helps maintain cool temperatures for fish and aquatic life. Also, thick brush makes a good shelter for domestic stock and wildlife — from flies and heat in the summer, and from biting winds in the winter.
- Roots of streamside plants bind soil particles together and help stabilize stream banks. During spring flooding, the speed of water is reduced, so damage to adjacent lands is lessened. Reduced bank erosion results in better quality water for a multitude of uses.
- Streamside areas intercept sediment and debris during floods, reducing damage to adjacent lands and trapping more productive soils. During winter, vegetation helps to deflect ice from cultivated lands.



Landowners who take care of their streamside property will find erosion to be less of a problem and that changes in the stream channel occur more slowly. The landscape is more attractive and recreation is more pleasant in a well-managed streamside area.

How Can You Better Manage Your Streams?

The first step in correcting stream and streamside problems is to learn to recognize signs of problems. You can determine the health and condition of a stream by looking carefully at the vegetation, soil and water.

Trampled, broken-down banks, scanty grass and shrubs, dead or dying trees, and silty water are sure signs of stream areas that need help. If your stream exhibits any of these symptoms, it could be improved.

Decide on a plan to improve it. Learn to recognize the early signs of trouble, and then get help to develop and put into practice a management plan that will work. Your local Conservation District can help you design a plan to better manage your stream.

CHECK YOUR STREAMSIDES FOR PROBLEMS

- ☒ Trampled streambanks
- ☒ Heavy siltation of stream bottoms
- ☒ Eroded or collapsed streambanks
- ☒ Plants few and scattered or absent
- ☒ Even-aged older trees with no young replacement trees
- ☒ Little or no animal life in the stream or along its banks

A WELL-MANAGED STREAM
IS TRULY AN ASSET — IT SAVES
YOU MONEY, SOIL AND WATER.

CREDITS: This guide was developed by the: USDA Soil Conservation Service,
Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation,
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in cooperation
with the Montana Association of Conservation Districts.

Additional copies of this and other guides are available at your local Conservation District office.

A Well-Managed Stream:
Its Worth to You —
the Landowner

1



Montana has over 18,000 miles of streams and rivers. If a stream runs through your property, you, as a landowner, want to protect the stream and the land along it — both are valuable assets.

This is the first in a series of guides designed to give you information on the basic principles of stream management, to help you manage your stream, and to provide guidelines for improving Montana’s waterways.

Individual guides, to be issued periodically, will cover a variety of topics such as common stream and streamside problems, the nature of streams and floodplains, and ways to maintain stable vegetation along waterways. It is hoped that these guides will stimulate you, the landowner, in recognizing the need for thoughtful stream management.

LANDOWNER’S GUIDE TO MANAGING STREAMS