



Riparian land is land that is connected to a waterway.

Riparian land can be connected to the waterway by proximity (a riverbank) or by water flow (a floodplain).

Waterways can take many forms. They include rivers, streams, creeks, wetlands, lakes, billabongs and drainage lines. Some waterways remain dry for prolonged periods, and only contain water after heavy rain events.

There are many reasons why riparian land is important.

Healthy riparian land helps keep sediment and nutrients out of our waterways and supports biodiversity. These functions provide us with clean drinking water for people and stock, and the ability to enjoy activities like swimming, kayaking and fishing. They also create special places where we can experience a strong connection with nature.

Healthy riparian land creates a micro-climate that benefits stock, wildlife and fish by reducing air and water temperatures in hot weather, and buffering icy winds and rain when it is cold.

Healthy riparian land also plays an important role in reducing the effects of climate change. Riparian soils and leaf litter store large amounts of carbon (hence the expression 'rivers of carbon'), and are significantly better at reducing nitrates than terrestrial soils.

Healthy riparian land supports a vast number of plants, animals, insects and other organisms which all work together to keep the waterway and its banks in good condition.



*Above: riparian areas provide multiple ecological and social benefits.
Photo: Greta Von Gavel.*

Different ways of assessing the health of your riparian land are described in Section 10. If your assessment indicates that your riparian land is not in good condition, removing stock is the quickest and easiest way to restore its health.

How much riparian land is on your property?

The amount of riparian land connected to a waterway will depend on:

- the size and type of the waterway;
- whether the waterway is permanent;
- topography.

The riparian land of a river that is prone to flooding will include its floodplains, which may extend several hundred metres either side of the riverbed.

In contrast, the riparian land alongside a narrow creek may be less than 15m wide.

The following photographs illustrate just a few of the different types of waterways and riparian land that may exist on your property.



The riparian land of this river extends from the waterline to the far edge of the floodplain. The edge of the floodplain is indicated on the right bank by a change in vegetation (taller trees) and on the left bank - which is under restoration - by the bottom of the escarpment. Photo: Annette Ruzicka.



The riparian land of this chain of ponds is indicated by the thicker, darker-coloured vegetation running either side of the waterway. Stock have recently been excluded, with the new fenceline visible on the far left of the photograph. Photo: Richard Snashall.

The riparian land connected to this creek extends to the top of the embankments. Contrast the 'healthy complexity and 'messiness' of this riparian area with the 'neat and tidy' riparian land in the next photo.
 Photo: Siwan Lovett.



The riparian land of this creek extends from the waterline to the top ridge of the bank. It is in poor health, as evidenced by erosion and the absence of vegetation other than grass and a few tall trees.
 Photo: Stuart Naylor.



The riparian land connected to this creek extends to the treeline (indicated by a change in soil type) on the right, and includes the swampy meadow on the left. The edge of the regenerating swampy meadow is indicated by a change in groundcover from tussocks to pasture. Note the remains of a fence built too close to the creek that was destroyed by flood.
 Photo: Richard Snashall.

