

Riparian Habitat Assessment Guide

Landowner Name:	
Evaluator:	Date:

Instructions: This assessment shall be used to identify the habitat limiting factors for riparian habitats. Each aquatic or riparian area must be assessed and scored individually. Weighted averages are not allowed.

If the evaluation determines that the current habitat quality is less than 0.5 (on a scale of 0 to 1), recommendations will be made to improve the existing habitat so the planned (future) condition will have a quality rating of 0.5 or more. **If wildlife is the client's primary objective, the land unit must achieve a quality rating of 0.7 or better.** If the evaluation determines that the current condition is equal to or greater than 0.5 (or 0.7 if wildlife in the primary objective), recommendations will be made to maintain the existing habitat in its present condition.

For all the habitat components below, select the habitat description that most closely mirrors the wetland(s) being appraised and enter that value in the table. Both the existing and planned conditions must be evaluated.

1. Riparian Buffer Width (only consider width on banks owned/controlled by client)

- Buffers extend at least 2 full stream channel widths on each side of the stream or a minimum of 50 feet if the active stream channel width is <25 feet wide or water body is a lake or pond = 10
- Buffers extend at least 1 full stream channel width on each side of the stream or a minimum of 30 feet if the active stream channel width is <30 feet wide or water body is a lake or pond = 7
- Riparian buffers are present but are less than 30 feet wide, or do not cover all banks owned/controlled by client = 3
- No riparian buffer is present = 1

	Area No.				
<i>Existing Condition</i>					
<i>Planned Condition</i>					

2. Riparian Plant Community

- Predominantly native trees and shrubs and all size classes present, invasive exotic plants < 5% = 10
- Predominantly native trees and shrubs, sapling or pole sized trees missing, invasive exotic plants <5% = 7
- Predominantly native woody riparian vegetation; exotic invasive plants 5-20% = 5
- Unmown perennial vegetation dominant; invasive exotic plants 5-20% = 3
- Exotic invasive plants >20%; mown perennial vegetation or row crops or bare ground = 1

	Area No.				
<i>Existing Condition</i>					
<i>Planned Condition</i>					

3. Water Quality and Fish Passage

- Good – minimal contribution of sediments, nutrients, etc., during storm events; no barriers to fish passage = 10
- Fair – moderate contributions of sediments, nutrients, etc., during storm events; no barriers to fish passage = 5
- Poor – loading by sediments, nutrients, etc., no buffers; bank erosion present; barriers to fish passage = 1

	<i>Area No.</i>				
<i>Existing Condition</i>					
<i>Planned Condition</i>					

4. Disturbance

- Generally undisturbed by humans, livestock, ATV's, etc.; no concentrated flows in buffer = 10
- Infrequently disturbed – occasional access by livestock or vehicles at crossings; concentrated flows in buffer are controlled = 7
- Frequent disturbance – livestock have continuous access, frequently used crossings; concentrated flows = 2

	<i>Area No.</i>				
<i>Existing Condition</i>					
<i>Planned Condition</i>					

Scoring

For each area evaluated, enter the before and after values for each habitat component. There is a total of 40 points possible. Divide the total for each area (both the existing and planned conditions) by 40. This will give you a value between 0 and 1, which represents the habitat value of the particular site in the existing condition and in the planned condition.

	Riparian Buffer Width	Riparian Plant Community	Water Quality / Fish Passage	Disturbance	Total	Habitat Value (total/40)
Riparian Area No.						
<i>Existing Condition</i>						
<i>Planned Condition</i>						
Riparian Area No.						
<i>Existing Condition</i>						
<i>Planned Condition</i>						
Riparian Area No.						
<i>Existing Condition</i>						
<i>Planned Condition</i>						
Riparian Area No.						
<i>Existing Condition</i>						
<i>Planned Condition</i>						