

A photograph of a pond with ducks and reeds. The background shows a line of trees and a body of water. In the middle ground, several ducks are swimming in the pond. In the foreground, there are tall, dry reeds and some debris. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

City of Winnipeg Waterways Protection

For a healthy livable city

Standing Policy Committee on Water, Waste and
Environment, July 2 2026

Winnipeg Riparian Areas Need Protection



Healthy riparian areas can serve extremely important ecological roles.

In many cases in Manitoba, riparian areas have been modified or cleared by previous land activity. Although the riparian area still exists, the natural vegetation has been removed and replaced by manicured lawns, or the undergrowth has been replaced by materials that do not serve an ecological function.

Unprotected riparian areas can lead to a variety of detrimental effects over time, including the following:





Harm to plant and animal life

Silt that enters surface water from runoff and erosion can have negative impacts on aquatic creatures and plant habitat by blocking sunlight.

Also, chemicals found in pesticides and fertilizers applied to land are harmful to wildlife and fish, and the nutrients in fertilizers can contribute to algae blooms.



Increased costs:

Water treatment costs are directly related to source water quality. The poorer the water quality, the higher the cost to treat it



Land loss:

Loss of land through erosion can occur quickly from storm events, or slowly over seasons and years. Landowners can find themselves losing a significant amount of land, sometimes with shorelines encroaching dangerously close to buildings and homes.

Riparian Area Setbacks are Necessary

Riparian area setbacks are best left in their natural state, undisturbed, and can provide a host of benefits:

Nutrients and pollutants are filtered from water by riparian vegetation improves water quality both mechanically and biologically as the water runs off the land and enters waterways. This improves water quality.

Water is slowed by natural vegetation as it moves through streams during large rainfall and flooding events.

Enhanced biodiversity and preservation of natural vegetation

Habitat and food supply for terrestrial and aquatic species

Shoreline stability

