

## ***THE IMPORTANCE OF SHORELANDS***

*If we were to take a magical journey starting at any point along a shoreline and follow its course in any direction between mountains and highlands, through valleys, and alongside the sea, we would in many cases eventually arrive back to where we had started. We would be amazed at the length of the journey and the diversity of the scenery. We would often find ourselves travelling along lush corridors of blue and green .... corridors with the value of gold. Along this ribbon of life we would witness the vast diversity of species that live there, and we might also gain an increased appreciation of the interrelatedness of all things.*

*Continuing our journey, we might also notice areas where the fabric of the ribbon was frayed, and places where it was torn altogether. By working to understand, protect, conserve, restore, and enhance them, we can help re-weave and eventually re-join our ribbons of life to become once again continuous corridors of blue and green.*

### ***THE VITAL EDGE***

**Shorelands**, also known as **riparian** areas, are the narrow strips of land located along marine waters, estuaries, lakes, reservoirs, wetlands, ponds, canals, sloughs, wooded draws, rivers, streams, creeks, sides of dry-bottomed gullies where sub-surface moisture is present, and even human-made drainage ditches. These areas are also often transition zones - the “vital edges” where land and water meet to create unique and often highly productive ecosystems.

### ***THE RIBBON OF LIFE***

Riparian ecosystems represent an assembly of interconnections among land, water, air, plants and animals. The abundance of water and the diversity of plant communities help make shorelands more productive than neighbouring upland areas – a true **ribbon of life**. Along with their adjacent freshwater littoral and marine intertidal zones, shorelands are valuable resources which provide numerous social, economic and environmental benefits.

### ***SOME BENEFITS OF HEALTHY SHORELANDS***

#### ***Shoreland ecosystems help...***

- purify water by filtering out sediment and trapping pollutants, including fertilizer and pesticide residues
- protect water quality by absorbing excess nutrients from both natural and human sources
- maintain base stream flows, recharge groundwater and limit flooding by absorbing water through banks and shorelands
- stabilize and protect banks from erosion by the presence of vegetation with dense root masses
- offer habitat and travel corridors for wildlife
- provide specialized habitat for rare plants and other species at risk, for all or part of their lives
- support fish spawning, rearing and feeding habitat
- act as a powerful “carbon sink” due to fast and dense growth of vegetation
- provide human-oriented cultural and economic values, including private and commercial consumptive uses (eg traditional botanicals and modern medicine, plant and wildlife harvesting, and tourism)
- provide human non-consumptive values such as spiritual and contemplative, archaeological and heritage, scenic and recreation, education and research, and the protection of property values

#### **Sources for some of this information:**

Manitoba Hydro, Shorelines, Shorelands and Wetlands - A Guide to Riparian Ecosystem Protection at Manitoba Hydro Facilities.  
Saskatchewan Wetland Conservation Corporation, Streambank Stewardship

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