



Anyone who lives close to a reservoir, river, or stream knows that there's a special kind of beauty in the place where land and water meet. The same quality that makes the waterfront environment unique also makes it vulnerable. Streambanks and shorelines are ecologically sensitive areas, and as such are easily damaged and slow to recover.

There's a name for this biologically distinctive area, the interface between land and water. It's called the **"riparian zone."** The vegetation that grows there serves as a buffer to protect both the land (by helping to hold soil in place and prevent erosion) and the water (by helping to filter pollutants).

Are you interested in ways to reduce erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife, and enhance aesthetics? If so, you need look no further than the hardy and attractive trees, shrubs, and

grasses that are native to our region and well-suited to life at the water's edge.

Once native plants are established, they require little or no maintenance, saving time and expense. Native shrubs, trees, and grasses produce fruits and berries that are used by our native wildlife. Additionally, it's refreshing to think that native varieties help provide regional context — they just "look right" in this part of the country — and help to preserve the botanical heritage of Polk County.

## In a nutshell

- If you have healthy native vegetation growing close to your streambank or shoreline, do everything you can to preserve it. It's your best insurance against property loss from erosion.
- If you have trees or shrubs that have died or are dying, consider replacing them with native species.
- If you have a lawn that is mowed down to the water's edge, you may already be experiencing erosion. Planting native trees and shrubs is often an effective way to prevent future damage.

## Riparian restoration

Polk County LWRD has long recognized the need to promote protection and restoration of riparian zones and encourages streambank and shoreline property owners to:

- Protect and enhance riparian zones
- Restore native vegetation