

Review of Riparian Management Policy in Alberta's Forests

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Government of Alberta ■
Sustainable Resource Development

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Review Objectives

1. Establish **goals** for riparian management in forested areas in the green zone.
2. Describe **current riparian management policy** and its implementation.
3. Assess **consistency** of policy implementation.
4. Assess **success** of current policy in meeting SRD goals.
5. Provide direction for **future revisions** to riparian management policy.
6. Identify **knowledge gaps** (Research Priorities)

Riparian Area Functions

1. Trapping and storing **sediment**.
2. Building and maintaining **banks and shorelines**.
3. Reducing and dissipating **energy**.
4. Minimizing changes in stream **water chemistry**.
5. Regulating water **temperature**.
6. Providing habitat for **aquatic organisms**
7. Providing habitat for **terrestrial organisms**



Assessment of Current Policy

3 Main Issues:

1. Designation of fixed-width buffers on permanent streams and lakes
2. Lack of buffers on intermittent streams
3. Provision for “variances” allowing for buffer harvesting



Fixed-Width Buffers

Policy advantages:

- ☐ Clear and relatively unambiguous
- ☐ Field layout simple
- ☐ Not complex
- ☐ Low total cost of implementation

Policy disadvantages:

- ☐ Perceived as arbitrary
- ☐ Poor science basis
- ☐ Insensitive to local conditions

Fixed-Width Buffers

Policy alternatives

- ☐ Objective / results-based policies
 - Natural disturbance model
 - More flexible site-level policy

Issues

- ☐ Need to know site level values
- ☐ Landscape level objectives
- ☐ Negative ecological impact of current policy?
- ☐ Does Natural disturbance model address all riparian values?
- ☐ Monitoring - enforcement

Fixed-Width Buffers

Conclusion:

Maintain fixed-width buffer policy at this time, but reassess after current research initiatives completed.



Policy Needs

- ❑ Development of a decision support framework to provide an objective basis for riparian management practices
 - Addressing full suite of riparian goals
 - Criteria and Indicators – thresholds



Policy Needs

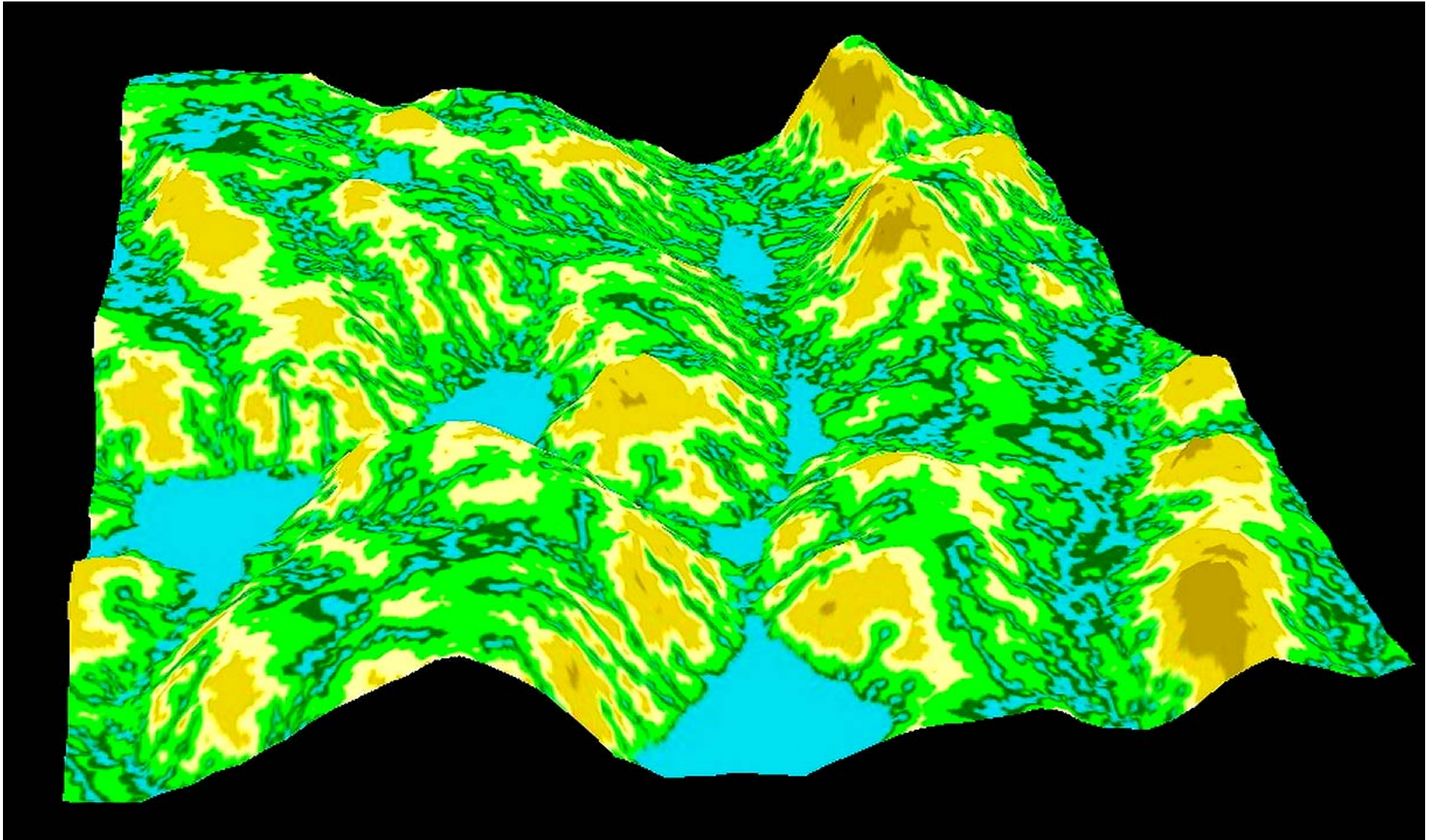
□ Riparian area contribution to landscape biodiversity. Issues include:

- Landscape level old forest retention focused towards riparian areas
- Stand level structure retention focused in riparian areas
- Contribution of riparian buffers to landscape biodiversity objectives

□ Ecological implications of not harvesting buffers

□ Implications of cumulative human activities on riparian management.

Wet areas mapping



Thank You

