

Riparian Management Demonstrations & Field Days  
By Garry Mayerle

Demonstration sites revealing best management practices to protect and return value from riparian areas in annual cropland are being set up in north east Saskatchewan's Carrot River watershed. Attend one of the site tours this cropping season to find out how these practices might benefit your farm!

One of the sites is being held in co-operation with the Northeast Agricultural Research Foundation (NARF) on land they farm in a collaborative agreement with Agricultural and Agri-Food Canada just east of the Melfort Research Station. This site demonstrates several management practices. One of these is to reduce field overlap by squaring up curves along the meanders of riparian areas on creeks and more permanent water ways. With the increasing popularity of GPS guidance systems producers are reducing overlap and the inefficiencies of doubling application of inputs. This is one more way to make those systems work better and leave a few square yards to enhance the environment. These small areas could return value to the land owner by producing commodities other than grain. One of the commodities easy to establish is forage. We are suggesting that grain farmers can find returns from these small areas of forage by finding someone to fall graze the whole field. This also has a good fit promoting livestock production in areas that are currently focused on annual grain production. Although the land owner won't make a fortune from this activity it may pay part of the property tax bill. Also, the environmental benefits for wildlife are significant.

One of the trials at most of these demonstration sites is a forage species project in conjunction with SAF's rangeland agrologist Al Foster. The species he will look at are: hybrid brome, meadow brome, creeping red fescue, tall fescue, alfalfa, and intermediate wheat grass. He will evaluate yield and feed value of these species for this kind of a grazing system. At the NARF site we will also test and demonstrate the use of NewHy RS Wheatgrass to take best advantage of saline areas.

One of the most damaging events for water bodies is erosion. Erosion reduces water quality which affects the organisms living in and possibly even off the water. Besides actual sediment pollution of water bodies there is also organic matter, nutrients and agricultural pesticides attached to the sediment that can pollute the water. One of the demonstrations at this site will look at erosion potential under different crop types such as pulses, cereals, and oilseeds. As well the erosion under different tillage systems will be evaluated. We will also see how a grassed waterway protects riparian areas from erosion.

The tour at this site will be in conjunction with the Melfort Research Station field day on the morning of July 12.

Another demonstration site is just northeast of Armley in co-operation with Dean Sturby. There has been a lot of publicity on the production and long-term value of hybrid poplar. At this location there is the opportunity to view hybrid poplar establishment and several forage varieties along a riparian area. We are suggesting that even large grain producers may find some economic return for riparian areas by finding someone interested in taking advantage of these small areas for production of a saleable woody species product. Other examples are berry production or maybe even maple syrup. There will be a summer field day at this site focused on upland management of riparian areas.

The last site is in the Kinistino area in co-operation with Troy Jones. This site focuses on managing grazing in the riparian area. Plans are in process for a fall stubble grazing field day in Oct at this site.

Take time this cropping season to come out to 1 of our tours and learn more about managing riparian areas for the environment and for profit. For more details call Mitchell Japp at 953-2796 or Garry Mayerle 878-8808.