

Ripple Effect Water Minute #7 - Red River Riparian Areas

When the first settlers arrived in the Red River Basin they may have settled near a river with trees. They used the trees to make their homes and fuel their fires, these areas are known as “riparian”. Riparian means to be associated with water.

Riparian areas are favored by wildlife because of the abundance of food and shelter. Riparian areas are easily destroyed by overuse, grazing, haying, cropping and lawn mowing.

Activities that destroy the bank vegetation destroy the stability of the river banks, which lead to the banks eroding. Erosion causes the river to shift during flooding and increase the amount of sediment that is carried with the river. The loss of overhanging vegetation increases the amount of sunlight that reaches the water which causes the water to become warmer, influencing the amount of algae growth, decreasing the available oxygen in the water and reducing the capacity of the river for fish habitat.

Riparian areas are important in maintaining the health of our rivers.

This Ripple Effect Water Minute is brought to you by the Red River Basin Commission.