



Developing Riparian Management Objectives

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Streams and riparian areas change for a variety of reasons and not all are connected to management. Yet, many have changed dramatically because of management. Some have fallen apart or become deeply incised, setting off a chain reaction of gully evolution. Others retained or regained the resilience needed to greatly improve their functionality and resource values after a management change. These positive changes occur in stages as part of a chain reaction with each improvement in structure or function bringing about further improvements in form, function, and values. To strategize management for these changes, begin with the end in mind, but set objectives for the measurable stages that will occur in a reasonable planning horizon. Begin with a riparian proper functioning condition assessment. Think about the unacceptable attributes, because these will focus attention on the changes needed from management, the type of management change needed, and the changes that can be accomplished and measured as objectives. Where streams are already functioning properly, think about what these functions can do to continue to improve habitats or other values. Good objectives are SMART, Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, and Trackable. Good objectives identify the kind and amount of change expected. They can be measured with well documented methods, expected budgets, and available staff time. They can be achieved within a specified time based on the site and its condition. They relate to or stem from the management anticipated. And, they specify the location where this can and should be measured such as in a Key or Designated Monitoring Area. However, both the amount of change and the time frame vary in relation to factors both in and out of management's control and this should be stated or inferred. For example a change in grazing management may allow vegetation to grow and this may eventually narrow a stream, the stream narrowing may not occur until after the vegetation has grown and there is sufficient high flow to deposit sediments or scour pools. With improved function, riparian/wetland areas better meet goals that may be hard to measure, such as beauty, average water quality, diversity of fish habitats etc. These goals would not make good objectives.

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