

## Riparian Areas: Functions and Strategies for Management

Committee on Riparian Zone Functioning and Strategies for Management, Water Science and Technology Board, Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology, Division on Earth and Life Studies, National Research Council



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The Clean Water Act (CWA) requires that wetlands be protected from degradation because of their important ecological functions including maintenance of high water quality and provision of fish and wildlife habitat. However, this protection generally does not encompass riparian areasâ€"the lands bordering rivers and lakesâ€"even though they often provide the same functions as wetlands. Growing recognition of the similarities in wetland and riparian area functioning and the differences in their legal protection led the NRC in 1999 to undertake a study of riparian areas, which has culminated in Riparian Areas: Functioning and Strategies for Management. The report is intended to heighten awareness of riparian areas commensurate with their ecological and societal values. The primary conclusion is that, because riparian areas perform a disproportionate number of biological and physical functions on a unit area basis, restoration of riparian functions along America's waterbodies should be a national goal.



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