

What is a Riparian Area?

Riparian areas are lands that occur along the edges of rivers, streams, lakes, and other water bodies. They are distinctly different from surrounding lands because of unique soil and vegetation characteristics that are strongly influenced by the presence of water. Riparian areas typically include stream banks, and floodplains and wetlands are often found within riparian areas. Benefits of riparian areas include temperature regulation, erosion control, flood control, water quality, and wildlife habitat.

Who Regulates Riparian Areas?

The answer to this question depends on many factors, including the presence of floodplain, wetlands, and fish habitat. Any given riparian area may have oversight from multiple regulatory agencies including Oregon Department of State Lands (DSL), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), Army Corps of Engineers, and the City of Millersburg. These agencies are known as Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs).

Guidelines for Activities in Riparian Areas:

1. **Removal of Vegetation.** Vegetation should not be removed from riparian corridors and riparian-related areas, except for the following purposes:
 - a. **Stream maintenance**, including removal/replacement of invasive/noxious/non-native vegetation and planting native plant species. Larger brushes, tree branches, obstructions, etc. should regularly be removed as a method of maintaining the conveyance capacity of the stream.
 - b. **Fire safety**: limited to mowing and removal to comply with fire safety requirements.
 - c. **Hazardous tree removal** as reviewed and approved by the Community Development Director. Hazardous trees removed should be replaced with similar native species or alternative approved native species.
2. **Development Activity.** Placement of new building structures or paving, as well as grading, excavation, and the placement of fill are prohibited. In some cases, development activities may be allowed if the appropriate permits are obtained from the AHJs.
3. **No disposal of yard waste or other organic materials.** Exceptions include downed trees that originated in the riparian area, leaf litter from riparian vegetation, and mulch allowed for riparian plantings.



- 4. Maintenance of lawns.** This includes non-native riparian-planted vegetation. Landscaping should not expand lawn areas or remove or damage any non-hazardous tree.
- 5. Maintenance pruning of existing trees.** This work should be kept to a minimum and be in accordance with the American National Standards Institute A300 standards for Tree Care Operations. Under no circumstances should the maintenance pruning be so severe that it compromises the tree's health, longevity, and resource functions.

Benefits of Maintenance in Riparian Areas:

- 1. Conveyance capacity.** Nearly all the precipitation that falls in the northern portion of Millersburg passes through Crooks Creek. As a main drainage channel for the City, it is important that the creek is clear of larger vegetation that could potentially reduce its flow capacity in order to help prevent flooding.
- 2. Water quality.** Larger brushes and trees (that do not restrict the conveyance capacity of the creek) help provide shade and reduce the temperature of the creek. Maintaining cooler temperatures helps reduce microbial growth in Crooks Creek and improves water quality overall.

Q&A:

Q: Can I place a fence around my property that includes riparian, wetland, or floodplain areas?

A: While it is better not to, it is possible in some circumstances. Measures to limit the impedance of flow should be included if a fence is constructed. A floodplain development permit may be required.

Q: Should I trim the grasses that are growing in the creek bed?

A: Not necessarily. Typically, grasses do not impede the flow of water through the creek at high flows, so they do not need to be trimmed. At low flows, they help to slow the velocity of the water and prevent erosion.

Q: What should be trimmed/removed in the riparian areas?

A: Anything such as large branches and obstructions that could potentially restrict the flow of water.



For more information see <https://www.cityofmillersburg.org/publicworks/page/storm-water>