

RIPARIAN ASSESSMENT

Riparian areas are the biologically rich and productive shoreline areas at the edges of lakes, streams, wetlands and rivers.

A GIS-based method and data set was created to assess riparian intactness (or condition) at a watershed scale, including lakeshores and streams. The riparian area was assessed for 50 metres back from the water line and given an intactness rating based on what is visible from satellite imagery.

INTACTNESS RATING

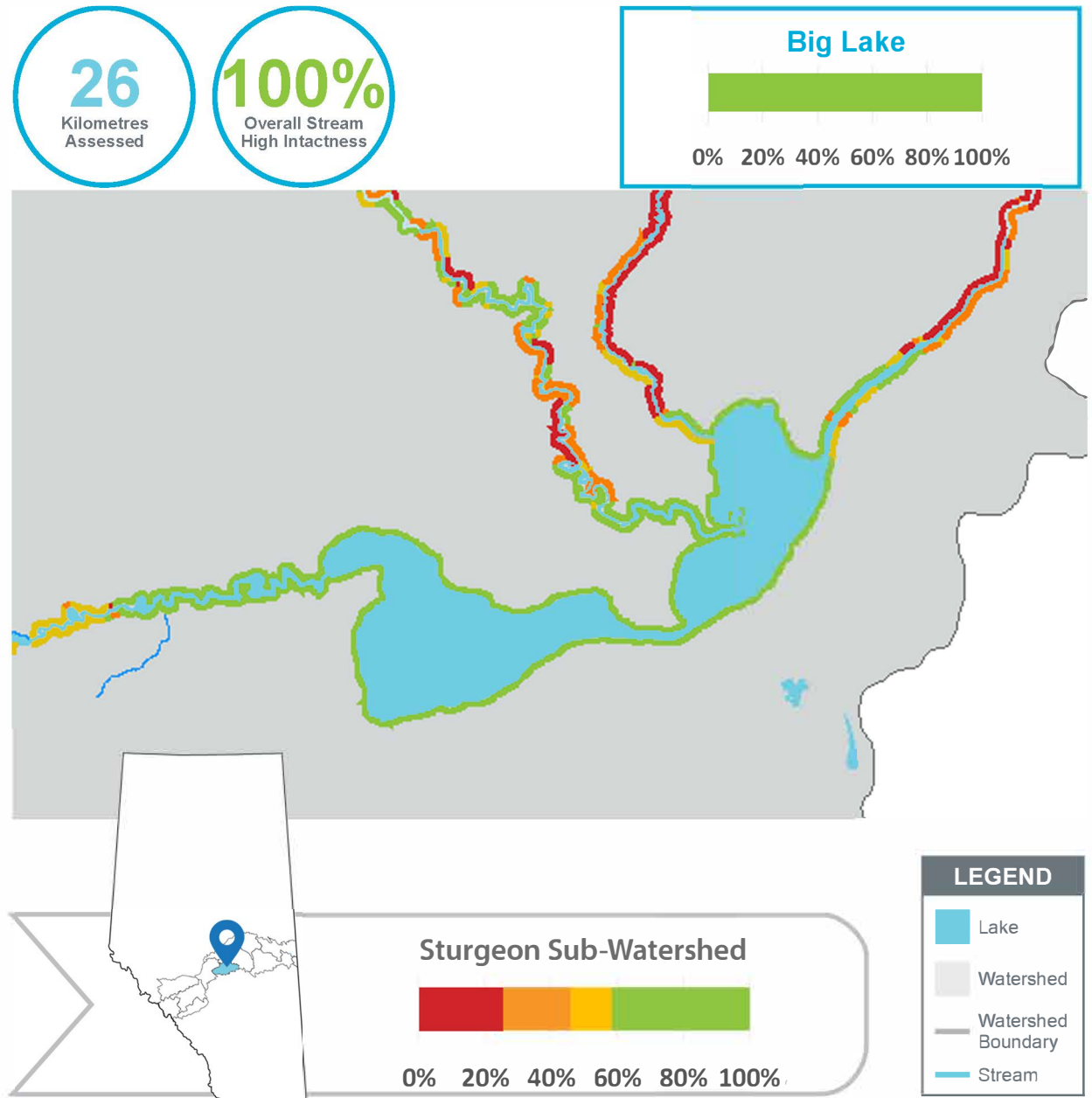
HIGH Vegetation present. Little or no human footprint.	LOW Vegetation present. Human footprint prevalent.
MODERATE Vegetation present. Some human footprint.	VERY LOW Vegetation mostly clear. Human footprint dominant.

Summary of Results

Data Year: 2020

The shoreline for Big Lake was considered having 100% high intactness, when intactness scores are summarized and compared for lakes, it is apparent that most of the lakes included in the Sturgeon Watershed are in fairly good condition, with 16 out of the 17 lakes having >50% high intactness.

Big Lake



Why are riparian areas important?



IMPROVE WATER QUALITY by trapping sediments, filtering nutrients and pollutants, reducing enrichment that leads to increased aquatic plant and algal growth;



MITIGATE FLOODS AND DROUGHTS by storing and slowing the release of water and reducing erosion;



IMPROVE BIODIVERSITY by providing fish and wildlife habitat and cooling water temperatures;

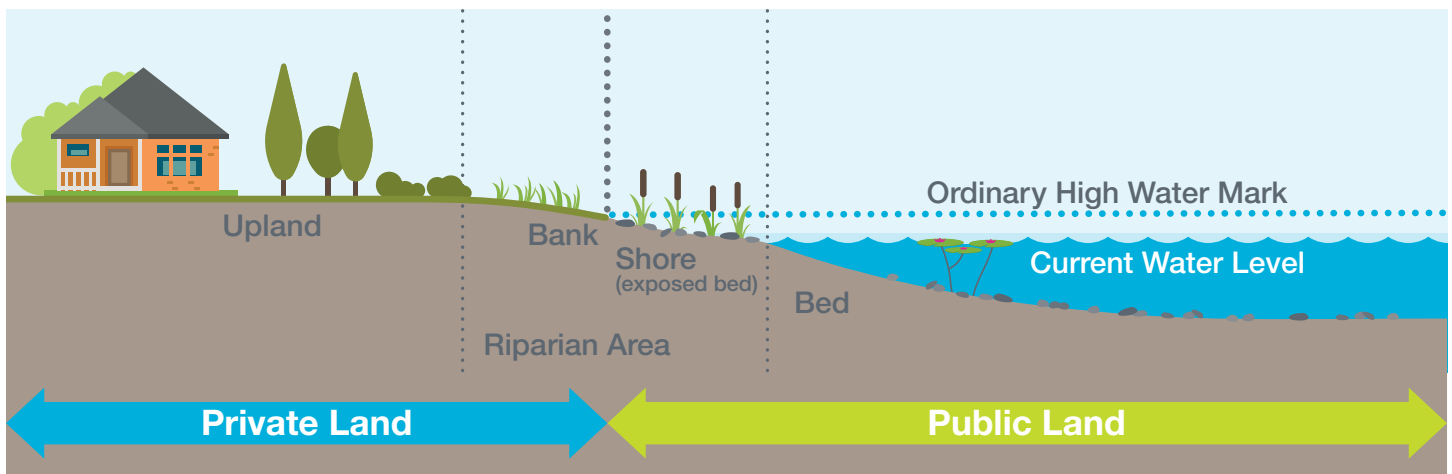


PROVIDE AESTHETICALLY PLEASING AREAS for recreation or cultural activities; and



ADD LOCAL ECONOMIC VALUE by increasing property values or providing areas for nature viewing.

Where is a riparian area?



How can you improve the health of your riparian area?

- Leave your shoreline natural—don't remove any plants, grasses or aquatic vegetation as they all play an important role in keeping your lake healthy.
- If your shoreline has been cleared of vegetation, replant with native plants as much as possible and watch for invasive species. Report as appropriate.
- Learn more about the health of your riparian area
- For larger areas, create a management plan to improve the intactness of the riparian area over time
- More resources are available at alberta.ca search "riparian"