

Shoreline Habitat Report Card

Use this report card to keep track of signs of good or ill health along a shoreline. Put a checkmark in box 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 (1 = low, 5 = high), depending on how correct the statements below are. If your shoreline doesn't get high grades, it may need some remedial attention. Modify this report card to suit the specific characteristics of your region

In Advance

Prepare a list of native aquatic and terrestrial plants and animals you can expect to find in your shoreline habitat, as well as a list of common invasive species.

Wildlife

The presence of wildlife is an excellent indicator of the overall health of the shoreline habitat. A healthy and varied wildlife population are signs of a healthy ecosystem.

You see evidence of wildlife along the shore, such as insects, birds, mammals, and amphibians.

1 1 2 3 4 5

You see evidence of native fish species living in your water source.

2 1 2 3 4 5

There are no signs of invasive or non-native plant and animal species.

3 1 2 3 4 5

There is evidence of working food webs — e.g., a Great Blue Heron eating a frog, a hare eating grass, a leaf chewed by an insect.

4 1 2 3 4 5

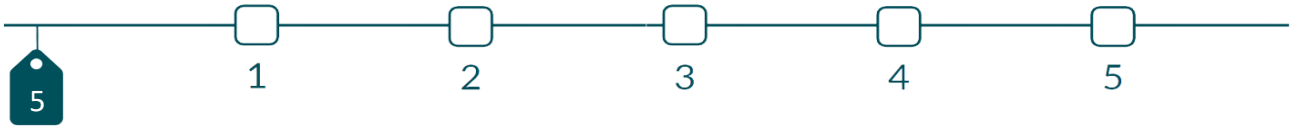
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Vegetation

Vegetation reduces the erosive forces of rain and water moving over the floodplain or along the streambanks. Vegetation also recycles and absorbs nutrients, filters contaminants from the water and provides food and shelter for wildlife.

A buffer strip of healthy vegetation along the shoreline is at least 30 meters wide.



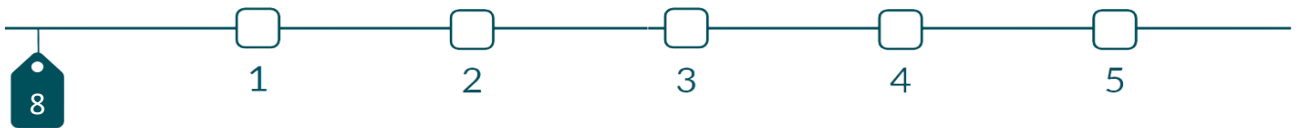
The buffer strip includes a wide variety of trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses, in all stages of birth, growth, death and decay.



An abundance of native plants grows in the area.



Lush, overhanging vegetation partly shades floodplains and streambanks.



Native aquatic plants grow in shallow waters.



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Flood Plain

Floodplains are low areas of land found next to a river or stream. This area floods after heavy rains or increased water levels from an adjacent water source.

There is evidence of large root networks keeping soil in place, preventing shorelines from washing away.

10 1 2 3 4 5

Along the banks, there is little or no erosion; the earth has not been stripped bare.

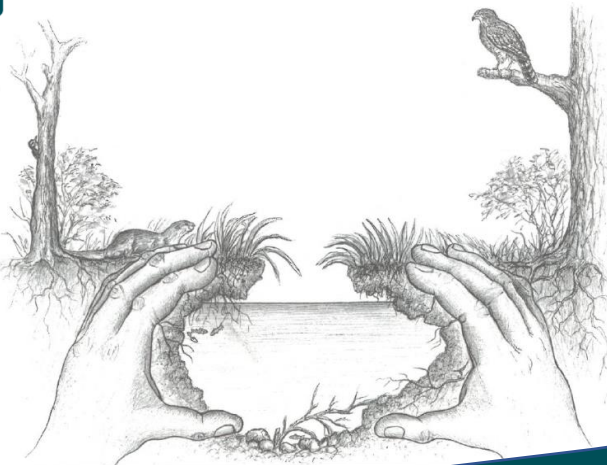
11 1 2 3 4 5

There is no evidence of livestock impacting the water system through waste pollutants and bank erosion.

12 1 2 3 4 5

Undercut banks are abundant along the shoreline (see illustration below).

13 1 2 3 4 5



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Structural Diversity

Variations in natural structures, heights and forms provide important habitats for many diverse native species.

Diverse habitats, including rock and brush piles, nesting cover, snags (standing dead trees), and deadfalls (downed trees), are present on land.

14

1 2 3 4 5

Pools, runs, riffles, marshes, boulders and woody debris exist in the water.

15

1 2 3 4 5

Water Quality

Debris and pollutants can negatively impact aquatic environments, affecting water quality, putting plants and animals at risk, and affecting the livelihood of local and global communities.

The waterway is free of litter, such as plastic debris, glass and cigarette butts.

16

1 2 3 4 5

There is no evidence of water pollution — e.g. green water (indicating an algal bloom caused by fertilizer run-off), muddy water (suggesting a build-up of sediment), a shiny film (evidence of oil contamination), or an orange or red coating (hinting at artificial pollutants).

17

1 2 3 4 5

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Human Impacts

Many significant environmental changes are caused or influenced by human activity either directly (e.g., vegetation removal) or indirectly (e.g., plastic production).

The area surrounding the shoreline is heavily developed (e.g., houses, parking lots, roads, dikes, docks, concrete retaining walls).

18 1 2 3 4 5

There are sources of contamination from nearby human developments (E.g., illegal dumping areas, potential runoff from pesticide and fertilizer-treated lawns.)

19 1 2 3 4 5

Your group's visit to the shoreline has had the lowest possible impact on the site.

20 1 2 3 4 5

Total score: /100

What does your shoreline habitat score tell you about the health of the environment?

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