

# *Riparian Monitoring*

EQUIPS RANCH MANAGERS  
TO MEET FEDERAL STANDARDS



Participants in the riparian monitoring workshop in Daniel.

## Situation

Ranchers who hold public land grazing permits are required to meet prescribed standards of landscape health on the allotments they use. On the other side, U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management rangeland management specialists work within their policy frameworks to identify monitoring methods to ensure prescribed standards are met.

The goal is to control overuse of public rangelands; but for ranch managers, understanding the methods and rationale used to make decisions is a challenge. In recent years, riparian (river or stream bank) monitoring has become increasingly important in guiding how allotments are managed. If, for example, certain conditions are not met near streams and waterways, a grazing permittee could be required to move to a different pasture or vacate an allotment altogether, either of which could have grave consequences. Thus, the need to know when, how, and why these management decisions are carried out is pressing.

Professional experience and careful research formed the basis of a riparian monitoring workshop hosted by UW Extension and Sublette County Conservation District. The UW Extension range educator presented the bank alteration monitoring method and the origin and use of the bank alteration guideline. Other speakers reinforced the value of permittee monitoring and presented research on how different stream systems respond to grazing pressure.

Following a session that introduced landowners and permittees to management and monitoring

methods specific to different types of stream systems, participants discussed the benefits and importance of cooperative and proactive monitoring.

In the afternoon, participants practiced monitoring techniques in the field and asked further questions about how to implement their own monitoring efforts, how to better engage with agency range staff, and when to seek professional technical assistance.

## Impact

Of the 13 riparian monitoring workshop participants, 9 completed the post evaluation. All of the respondents reported increased knowledge about bank alteration and how it is applied. They reported an 81% increase in understanding of riparian systems and a 95% increase in understanding of what they could do to monitor riparian areas. When asked about key concepts they learned from the workshop, participants cited “how to properly monitor riparian areas” as most important.

As a result of the workshop, participants are better equipped to implement riparian monitoring programs on private lands, and ranch managers are better prepared to navigate the intricacies of federal land grazing and riparian health guidelines.

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### Glenn Owings

UW Extension Educator  
Range Management  
Sublette, Lincoln, Uinta, Sweetwater, Teton Counties  
(307) 307-4380  
[gowings@uwyo.edu](mailto:gowings@uwyo.edu)