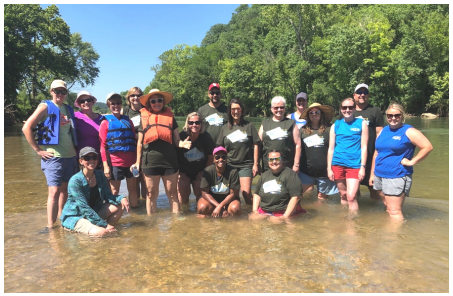
Living on the Land

A watershed is an area of land drained by a waterbody like a stream, river, or lake. The waterbody is directly affected by what happens on the land within the watershed. You are always in a watershed, so what you do on the land affects a waterbody near you, even if the water is not visable from where you are.

Unsustainable land uses can pollute a stream, leaving it shallow, hot, full of sediment and algae, and with eroding banks. A degraded stream can increase the cost of producing drinking water, cannot be a good home to fish, and unstable banks can make the stream a hazard. One landowner's actions can cause problems for both upstream and downstream neighbors. It is in your power to positively impact the waterbodies near you.

According to conservationist Kristine Tompkins, "You can't protect a place unless you understand it. You can't know a place unless you love it." Take young people to a stream and allow them to explore and play. Understanding, knowing, and loving a place requires repeated outdoor experiences. Establishing a connection with nature is critical to its long-term protection.



Become a Blue Thumb Volunteer!

Adopt a stream near you!

To find out more about upcoming trainings:
www.bluethumbok.com

email: bluethumb@conservation.ok.gov

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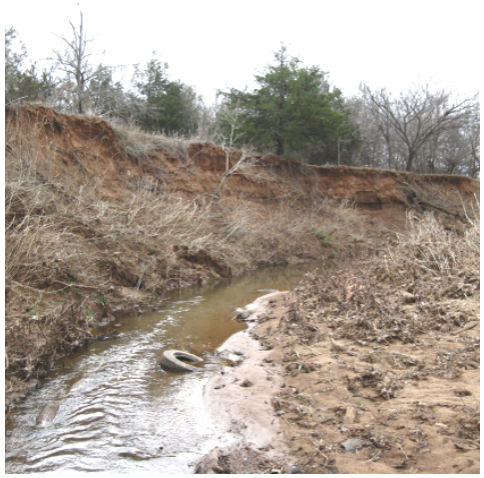
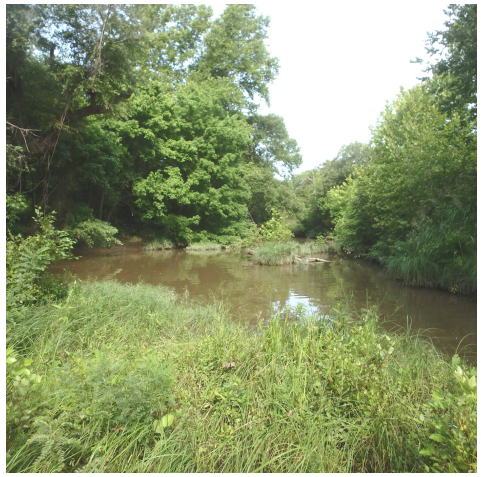
Living on the Land

Protecting Streams and Rivers

Living in a rural setting has many benefits: privacy, space, and the chance to enjoy the natural resources on your property. However, with these benefits comes the responsibility of being a good neighbor and steward of those natural resources. One of the most important things you can do for yourself, your neighbors, and everyone living downstream of you is to protect the stream or river that flows through your property.





Your land management techniques influence the health of water bodies on your property. You have a choice; your stream or river can be raw and eroding (left), or it can function better with a healthy riparian area (right).

Which stream would you rather have flowing through your property? Look inside to discover how you can be a good steward!

Oklahoma Blue Thumb Water Quality Education Program

"Stream Protection Through Education"

Being a Good Steward

Many people don't realize that what they apply to their property can be picked up in rainfall and carried to a nearby stream. Good management of your land and water makes for a healthier environment for all creatures!

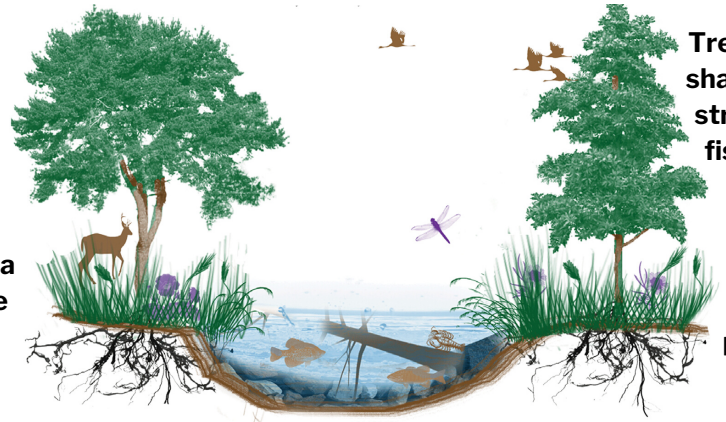
Whether you are new to the country or have been here awhile, keep in mind what it means to be a steward of the land:

- **leave riparian areas undisturbed**
  - leave at least a 30 ft. buffer between the water's edge and your mowing, farming, grazing, or other land disturbing practices
  - fence cattle and other livestock out of the creek and provide alternative water sources
- **do not overgraze**
  - consider implementing rotational grazing
  - do not exceed the land's carrying capacity
- **leave areas of native plants for wildlife and pollinators**
  - native grasses have deep fibrous roots that can help prevent erosion, both in the field and along a streambank
- **get involved in conservation planing**
  - get to know your local conservation district and learn about conservative planning
- **test your soil**
  - before applying fertilizer, have your soil tested at your local OSU Extension Office
  - never apply chemicals if rain is predicted
- **keep ATVs in upland areas and on designated trails**
- **learn about alternative farming practices**
  - try reduced till or no-till methods
  - plant cover crops

Riparian Area

Why it Matters

A healthy riparian area provides many benefits to both the aquatic and terrestrial areas around a stream. When you maintain a healthy riparian area, you provide beneficial services to your upstream and downstream neighbors.



An unhealthy/missing riparian area causes many problems in a stream. When you remove all vegetation from the banks, it can have negative effects on your upstream and downstream neighbors.