



Stream Corridor Restoration: Principles, Processes, and Practices

U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Restoration practitioners share simultaneously in the good fortune and responsibility of participating in a new endeavor - stepping beyond the current concept of natural resources conservation to a newer concept of restoring the living environment to an ecologically viable condition -to create places that improve rather than degrade over time. This document is a result of an unprecedented cooperative effort among fifteen Federal agencies and partners to produce a common reference on stream corridor restoration. It responds to a growing national and international public interest in restoring stream corridors. Increasingly, feature articles, case studies, and published papers focus on stream corridors as critical ecosystems in our living environment. This document encapsulates the rapidly expanding body of knowledge related to stream corridors and their restoration. It makes no endorsement of one particular approach to restoration over another; nor is it intended as a policy document of any participating Federal agency. It includes the full range of possibilities facing restoration practitioners, including no action or passive approaches, partial intervention for assisted recovery, and substantial intervention for managed recovery. The document encourages locally led, public involvement in restoration planning and implementation. The challenges in restoring thousands of miles of degraded stream corridors must involve government agencies, public and private landowners, permit holders, and local volunteer, civic, and conservation groups and individuals. This document takes a more encompassing approach to restoration than most other texts and manuals. It provides broadly applicable guidance for common elements of the restoration process, but also provides alternatives, and references to alternatives, which may be appropriate for site-specific restoration activities. Moreover, the document incorporates and reflects the experiences of the collaborating agencies and provides a common technical reference that can be used to restore systems based on experiences and basic scientific knowledge. As a general goal, this document promotes the use of ecological processes (physical, chemical, and biological) and minimally intrusive solutions to restore self-sustaining stream corridor functions. It provides information necessary to develop and select appropriate alternatives and solutions, and to make informed management decisions regarding valuable stream corridors and their watersheds. In addition, the document recognizes the complexity of most stream restoration work and promotes an integrated approach to restoration. It supports close cooperation among all participants in order to achieve a common set of objectives. The guidance contained in this document is applicable nationwide in both urban and rural settings. The material presented applies to a range of stream types, including intermittent and perennial streams of all sizes, and rivers too small to be navigable by barges. It offers a scientific perspective on restoration work ranging from simple to complex, with the level of detail increasing as the scale moves from the landscape to the stream reach.

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