



Landowner's Guide to Managing Riverbottom Forests in Southern Manitoba

Introduction

Riverbottom forests are found growing along the edges of rivers and streams in southern Manitoba. Seasonal flooding enriches the soil, creating productive sites which support a variety of trees, shrubs and herbs.

Riverbottom forests are an important resource for landowners. They can provide a source of harvestable timber for fuelwood, sawlogs or speciality wood products as well as support wildlife, add aesthetic value and help maintain the health of the streams and rivers.

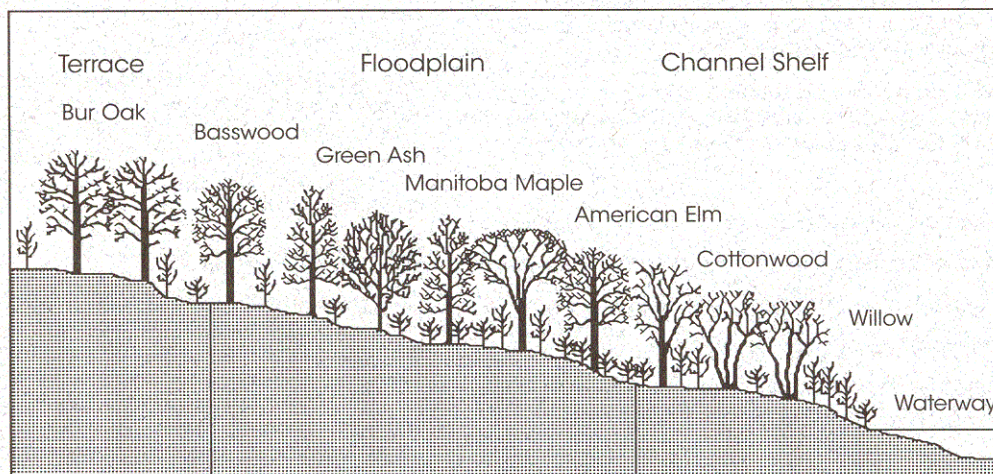
These management recommendations are provided for landowners in southern Manitoba with riverbottom forest on their property who wish to manage these forests for timber production. They have been developed to help landowners ensure the long term sustainability of their riverbottom forests. While the main purpose of these management recommendations is timber production, wildlife conservation and aesthetic values also have been considered.

Managing Different Types of Riverbottom Forest

Within a riverbottom forest, there are generally three locations which support slightly different forest types. In some cases, different management techniques are recommended for each type of riverbottom forest. Even in small forest stands these different types will be present but it may be very hard to tell where one stops and another starts. In such cases, the landowner should apply the management recommendations suited to the dominant tree species found in the stand.

The three locations within riverbottom forest stands and the different types of riverbottom forest they support are briefly described below.

Figure 1
Profile of a representative riverbottom forest illustrating the three different zones that may be present.



Terrace

Farthest away from the water, the terrace is a higher area less prone to flooding, where the forest is dominated by bur oak, along with some of the trees found on the floodplain.

Floodplain

Elevated above the channel shelf, the floodplain is a gently sloping or flat area with forest dominated by ash, elm, Manitoba maple and, in some areas, basswood.

Channel Shelf

Located next to the water, forest in this area is dominated by willow, cottonwood and other plants which are adapted to frequent flooding.

Applying the Recommendations

While these management recommendations are generally applicable to riverbottom forests in southern Manitoba, there are variations within each of these three forest types. Landowners should be aware that individual riverbottom forest stands may need specific management prescriptions to reach their management goals. Landowners should also keep in mind that these recommendations have been developed with the goal of sustained timber production. Managing riverbottom forests for other objectives such as wildlife conservation or aesthetics may require different management prescriptions.

Getting Additional Information

Landowners interested in managing their riverbottom forests are encouraged to refer to the publication "Woodlot Management for the Prairie Provinces" produced by the Farm Woodlot Association of Saskatchewan. Staff of the Manitoba Agro Woodlot Program, located throughout southern Manitoba, are also available to provide advice and assist landowners in developing management plans for their woodlots.

Written by Marr Consulting & Communications Ltd., and Synthen Resource Services for the Canada - Manitoba Partnership Agreement in Forestry