LIVING ON THE EDGE

The Riparian Zone

The riparian and aquatic zones are important because they protect the health of our waterways. Changes in one zone will impact on the other.

What is the riparian zone?

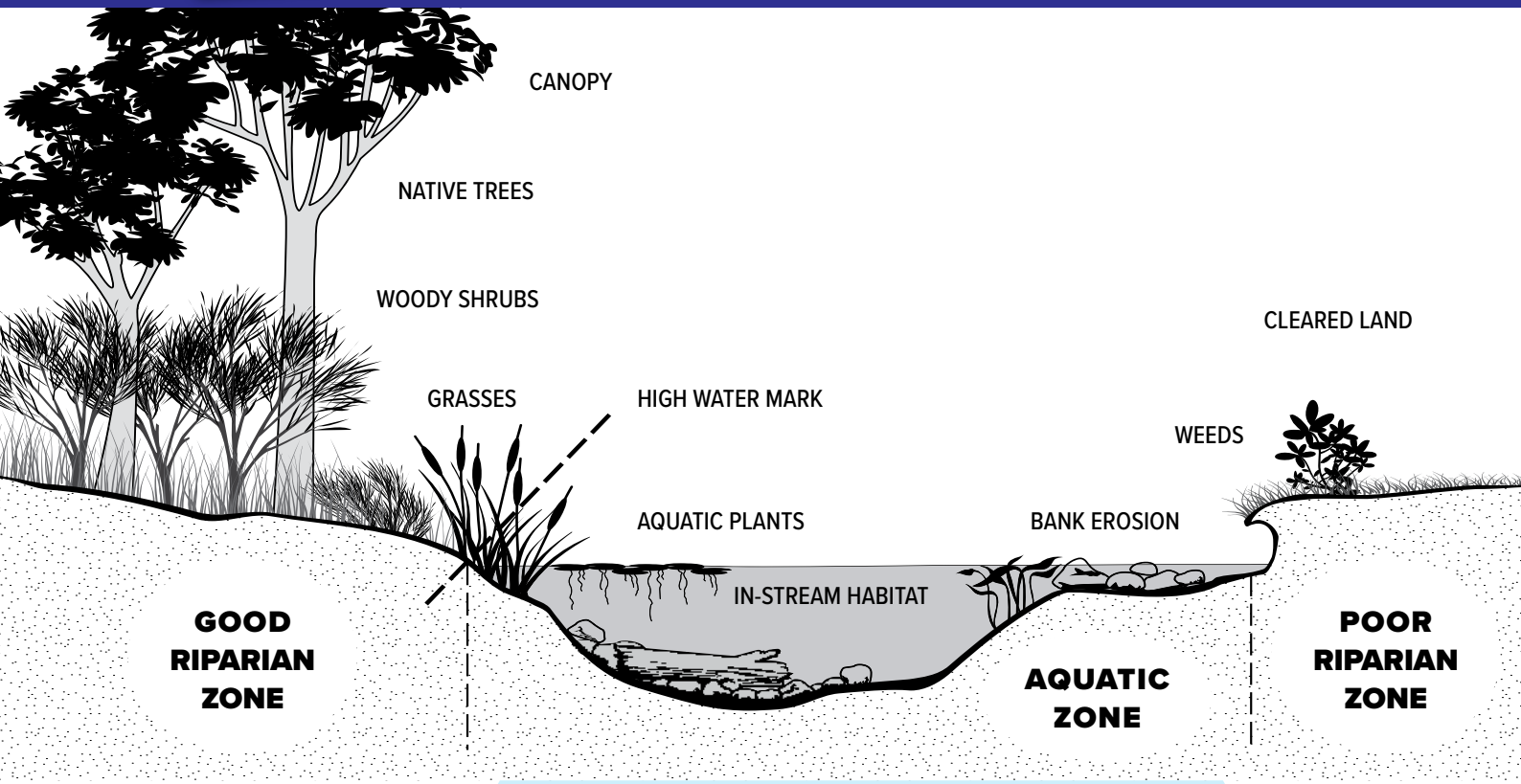
The riparian zone extends along the banks of a river, creek or wetland. This area is next to, and influenced by, the water body. It includes aquatic and semi-aquatic plants, as well as tree and shrub vegetation.

The riparian zone habitat is an important link between the aquatic environment and the adjoining land. It provides food and shelter for aquatic, semi-aquatic and land animals such as lizards, snakes, bats, frogs and birds. When riparian vegetation is lost, many animals can no longer survive due to loss of habitat.

Riparian vegetation is also important to protect the waterway from erosion and prevent pollutants entering the stream. A lack of plants along the banks, like in the photo below, may cause poor water quality by increasing turbidity, which affects aquatic life.

SOURCE: Garland, I. and Coleman, K. (2020) *Waterbug Blitz Education Resource for Australian Schools*. National Waterbug Blitz, NSW.

GOOD, FAIR AND POOR



The **aquatic zone** is the area of a waterway in the main channel that extends to the high-water mark.

GOOD EXAMPLE

- Vegetation down to the water
- Mix of trees, shrubs, grasses and rushes
- No signs of erosion
- In-stream habitat
- Aquatic plants

FAIR EXAMPLE

The farmer is working towards turning a Poor Riparian Zone into a Good Riparian Zone.

- Grassed to the water
- Trees and shrubs planted
- Livestock excluded

POOR EXAMPLE

- Erosion of banks
- Cattle access the water freely, destroying banks
- Water muddy from cattle
- Weed growth in both riparian and aquatic zones

DIAGRAM SOURCE: Garland, I. and Coleman, K. (2020) *Waterbug Blitz Education Resource for Australian Schools*. National Waterbug Blitz, NSW.

My local waterway

Which side of the river would you prefer to live on?

In this activity you are going to use what you have learned about riparian zones to label a diagram and create a list of things that make a good and poor riparian zone. With permission from your parents/guardians, you will get the opportunity to take photos of riparian zones at your local waterways, rate them as good, fair or poor and identify why you have given them this rating.

STEP 1 Label the area on the diagram that you think is the 'aquatic zone' for this waterway.

STEP 2 Label the two areas on the diagram that you think make up the 'riparian zone' for this waterway.

STEP 3 One side of the diagram shows a healthy or good riparian zone and one side shows an unhealthy or poor riparian zone. In the table, list the things you can identify that make the good riparian zone healthy and the poor riparian zone unhealthy.

STEP 4 Visit some spots on your local waterways with your parents/guardians. Take photos of the riparian zones (everywhere that has a river, creek, lake or other waterway has a riparian zone at its edge). Print your photos and identify whether you would rate them as good, fair or poor riparian zones. Write a list of the things you can see in each photo that you think makes them good, fair or poor. Add this sheet and your photos to your Backyard Puzzle Box.

Email your riparian zone photos to info@adventuresatyourplace.com.au

This activity has been prepared in partnership with the National Waterbug Blitz and Hunter Water.

DID YOU KNOW?

Many weeds, such as willows, blackberry, lantana and alligator weed, have been introduced to Australia. Few insects or birds live under or in weed species. Weeds can also pollute the waterways — willow leaves can clog waterways and camphor laurel leaves can be toxic to native fish.

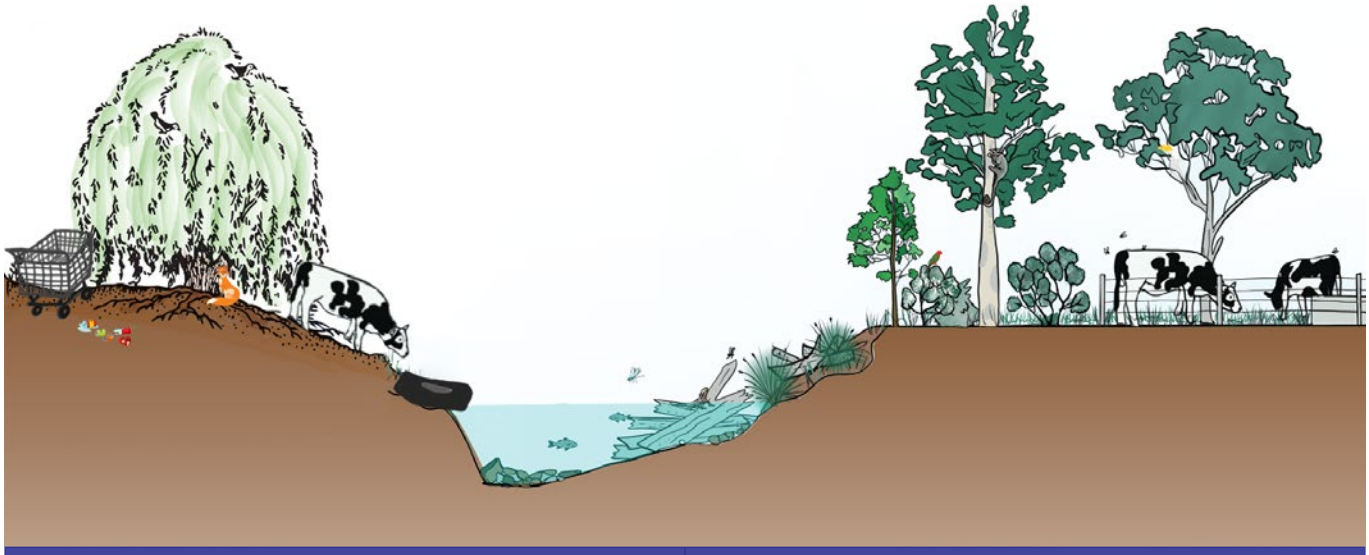
NSW GOVERNMENT Local Land Services

'Adventures at your place' is delivered by Hunter Local Land Services in partnership with PeeKdesigns.

For more information: www.adventuresatyourplace.com.au

SPOT THE DIFFERENCES

1. Label the area on the diagram that you think is the '**aquatic zone**' for this waterway.
2. Label the areas on the diagram that you think make up the '**riparian zone**' for this waterway.
3. List the things you can identify that make the **good riparian zone** healthy and the **poor riparian zone** unhealthy



Poor riparian zone (unhealthy)	Good riparian zone (healthy)