

From: [Dave Wilkinson](#)
To: nbell@advocates-nwea.org
Cc: [Michael Powers](#)
Subject: Re: interpretation of riparian rules
Date: Friday, February 03, 2012 4:12:00 PM
Attachments: [site_capable.pdf](#)
[Untitled attachment 00105.htm](#)

Hi Nina,

Thank you for the follow-up questions about how we evaluate riparian vegetation. Please find attached some photos of an example compliance case. They show appropriate vegetation in the background and degraded riparian conditions in the foreground. These photos were discussed at the meeting on January 26th. If you would like to see any specific compliance cases or other compliance related information please make a public information request to:

Ray Jaendl

Oregon Department of Agriculture

635 Capitol Street NE

Salem, Oregon 97301

ODA has evaluated riparian conditions in a variety of situations, not just in our compliance program. Some examples follow. We work closely with the Soil and Water Conservation Districts in developing riparian restoration projects. Staff serves on OWEB's regional technical review teams. We provide technical and administrative support to Oregon's CREP program. We work with NRCS as part of their local and basin working groups to help set funding priorities for the federal farm bill programs. Our program has a Riparian Specialist and a Monitoring Specialist who are currently working on methods and protocols to assess riparian areas as a means to focus our future work.

To support vegetation composition determinations, we have relied on a concept we have called "site capability." We define this term as the highest ecological status an area can attain given political, social, or economic constraints.

The process of evaluating site capability includes integrating information from a variety of sources. For example, the Natural Resources Conservation Service Ecological Site descriptions assimilate information about soils, topography, climate, hydrology, current vegetation assemblages, potential vegetation assemblages, and disturbance regimes. Plant community descriptions from the US Forest Service augment site capability descriptions to provide a clearer picture of the relationships between current and potential vegetation. We also rely on Oregon's Department of State Lands knowledge of wetland and riparian plant communities. We have used DSL's protocols in some of our compliance cases.

In addition to these descriptions, we look for remnant or reference vegetation at each site, if it is available. Staff considers limiting factors such as invasive species and channel morphology as they make their best professional judgment of the current and potential vegetation. I hope this answers your questions, but if you would like more information, please let me know. I will be out of the office until March 1st. In my absence, you are welcome to contact Mike Powers, AgWQ Program Compliance and Planning Leader, 503 986-4761, mpowers@oda.state.or.us.

Thanks for your interest in the program.

Dave