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Stepwise Procedure to Identify the Lateral Limits of a Riverine AA

Experts in CRAM are thoroughly familiar with all the metrics and realize that many of them can be worked on while the AA is being delineated in the field. Having all the metrics in mind helps streamline the CRAM assessment while providing ample opportunity to hone-in on final metric scores through ongoing discussions of the possibilities. The following procedure involving a variety of metrics is recommended for delineating the lateral extent of riverine AAs. It is essential to keep in mind that the AA should include that portion of the adjacent riparian area immediately bordering the active floodplain that directly influences bank stability, shading of the channel or its floodplain, and allochthanous input. Be careful to strictly apply the definitions of bankfull, floodplain, riparian area, and allochthanous input provided in the glossary of the CRAM manual.

1. Walk the channel to decide on the upstream and downstream limits of the AA, and along the way also begin deciding on the following:
    a. the likely bankfull contour along both banks;
    b. places to run cross-sections for estimating entrenchment;
    c. the extent of the active floodplain (the flat area at or just above the bankfull contour – note that some floodplains are many meters wide, whereas others may be less than 1 m wide);
    d. the plant patches that will be used to assess horizontal interspersion.
2. Starting at one end of the AA, walk the channel within the AA to delineate its lateral extent based on the following guidelines:
    a. for each tree or large shrub that overhangs any part of the channel or its active floodplain, or that probably shades any part of the channel or its floodplain at any time-of-day, draw the lateral boundary of the AA to include the entire canopy of that tree.
    b. for each plant patch, as defined in step 1, that exists along the backshore (landward margin) of the active floodplain, draw the lateral boundary of the AA at a distance landward of the floodplain backshore equal to the doubled value of the maximum height of the plant patch. There can be a different AA width for each plant patch along either side of the AA.
    c. for segments greater than 5 m along the backshore of the floodplain that lack at least 5% cover of vegetation, draw the lateral boundary of the AA at a distance of 2m landward from the floodplain backshore. For areas of bare ground less than 5 m long, assume the AA width is equal to the width determined for the adjacent, upstream segment.
3. For each side of the AA, connect the lateral boundaries drawn for each tree and plant patch to create the lateral boundary of the AA.