

## RIPARIAN GRAZING STRATEGIES

32

**THE** preceding case studies are representative of a wide range of riparian area conditions, problems, and opportunities.

For the most part, they demonstrate that the productivity of degraded riparian areas can be restored, usually with a net gain in livestock forage.

This runs counter to the common perception that improved management of riparian areas is a zero-sum game where improvements in fish and wildlife habitat, water quality and other watershed values can only be achieved at the expense of livestock forage.

These case studies also demonstrate there is no cookbook of simple, universal recipes for successful riparian grazing strategies.

There are virtually infinite variations in hydrologic and climatic conditions, in geology, soils, and stream character, and in plant species and plant communities. Local site condition, trend and potential also vary widely. This natural variation and complexity is compounded by variations in local grazing traditions, and in the economic status, attitudes and objectives of livestock operators.

**As illustrated in this infrared photograph, riparian areas over much of the western United States are thin lines of green across vast areas of arid and semi-arid land. Traditional grazing strategies for the most part have been designed for the far more extensive upland vegetation. In consequence, riparian vegetation has been overgrazed and riparian areas and streams degraded over large areas of land.**

*FOR the most part... the productivity of degraded riparian areas can be restored, usually with a net gain in livestock forage.*

