

# What is a Floodplain?

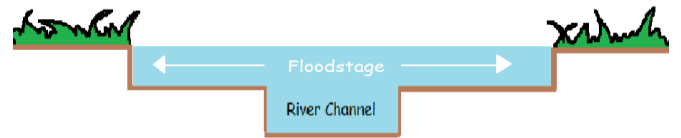
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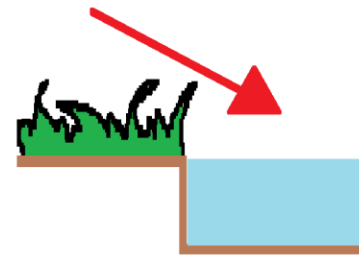
When a river overflows, water spills over onto the land, leaving behind rocks and mud. Over time, layers of rocks and mud build up to create what is called a floodplain. The **floodplain** is the flat land next to the river where this mud has built up and is a unique habitat.



Floodplains support a high level of species **diversity**, which means they are home to many different species of plants and animals. These habitats can support around 100 times the number of species that are found in the river! On the floodplain of the Ohio River you'll see beaver and deer, as well as the fox squirrel, pileated woodpecker, and many different insects. Look for water-loving trees and plants such as the silver maple, sycamore and eastern cottonwood.



A **riparian zone** is an area of plant life that runs along the bank of a river. Riparian zones keep the river healthy and clean by filtering rainwater **runoff**, before it reaches the river. This is important because when runoff travels downhill to the river, it can pick up chemicals and toxins that would otherwise pollute the river.



1. What is a floodplain and why is it important? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What is species diversity? \_\_\_\_\_

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3. What is a riparian zone and how does it keep a river healthy? \_\_\_\_\_

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