

Riparian landowner

If you own land adjoining, above or with a watercourse running through it, you have certain rights and responsibilities. In legal terms you are a 'riparian owner'. If you rent the land, you should agree with the owner who will manage these rights and responsibilities.

What is a riparian landowner?

A riparian landowner is the owner of land that is next to a watercourse or has a watercourse running through or beneath it. Usually, your house deeds will tell you whether you are responsible for a watercourse.

You are likely to be a riparian landowner if your property/land:

- Has a watercourse running through or underneath it
- Has a watercourse running below it in a pipe or culvert
- Boundary is next to a watercourse (unless it is owned by someone else), or
- Has a garden/fence/hedge with a watercourse running alongside it

Your Rights

As a riparian landowner, you have a number of rights, including:

- To receive a flow of water in its natural state, without undue interference in its quantity or quality
- To protect your property against flooding from the watercourse and to prevent erosion of the watercourse banks or any nearby structures
- A riparian owner usually has the right to fish in the watercourse, provided legal methods are used. A rod licence will usually be required from the Environment Agency
- A riparian owner can abstract a maximum of 20 cubic metres of water per day for the domestic purposes of their own household or for agricultural use (excluding spray irrigation) without a licence. Most other types of abstraction will require a licence from the Environment Agency

Your Responsibilities

You also have a number of responsibilities as a riparian landowner, these include:

- To ensure that water is allowed to flow without obstructions
- To keep the bed and banks clear from obstructions
- To manage vegetation within the channel and on the banks
- To keep any structures, such as trash screens and culverts, clear from debris, silt and rubbish

For more details on the rights and responsibilities of a riparian landowner, please visit the [Environment Agency's guidance on owning a watercourse](#).