

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# A System for Mapping Riparian Areas in the Western United States



## ***Riparian Definition***

There are many riparian definitions used by government agencies and the private sector. Riparian initiatives often concentrate on either functionality or land use applications where an exact definition is not required. However, a riparian definition is essential for consistent and uniform identification and mapping. For these purposes, in the area of applicability:

**"Riparian areas are plant communities contiguous to and affected by surface and subsurface hydrologic features of perennial or intermittent lotic and lentic water bodies (rivers, streams, lakes, or drainage ways). Riparian areas have one or both of the following characteristics: 1) distinctively different vegetative species than adjacent areas, and 2) species similar to adjacent areas but exhibiting more vigorous or robust growth forms. Riparian areas are usually transitional between wetland and upland."**



Salt Cedar (scrub-shrub, deciduous) along the Little Colorado River in Coconino County, Arizona.