Stream Channelization Encyclopedia Article

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Stream Channelization

The process of straightening or redirecting natural streams in an artificially modified or constructed stream bed. Channelization has been carried out for numerous reasons, most often to drain **wetlands**, direct water flow for agricultural use, and control **flooding**. While this process makes a stream more useful for human activities, it tends to interfere with natural river habitats and to destabilize stream banks by destroying riparian vegetation. When annual flood patterns are disrupted, fertilizing **sediment** is no longer deposited on river banks and excessive sediment accumulation can occur downstream. Perhaps most importantly, wetland **drainage** and the removal of instream obstacles such as rocks, fallen trees, shallow backwaters, and sand bars eliminate feeding and reproductive habitats for fish, aquatic insects, and birds.