



Fauna Technical Note No. 8: Wildlife habitat strips

The Fauna Technical Note Series provides information for Forest Practices Officers on fauna management in production forests. These technical notes are advisory guidelines and should be read in conjunction with the requirements of the Forest Practices Code.

The Technical Notes can be accessed on the Forest Practices Authority's website: www.fpa.tas.gov.au

1. Introduction

'Wildlife habitat strips should be retained to maintain habitat diversity. As a guide, strips of uncut forest 100 m in width...should be provided every 3–5 kms' (Section D3.2, page 62, *Forest Practices Code*, 2000).

The basic aim in the location of wildlife habitat strips is the inclusion of representative fauna habitats present within an area. The following (adapted from Taylor 1991) should be taken into account when planning and managing wildlife habitat strips. These guidelines aim to clarify the provisions for wildlife habitat strips contained in the *Forest Practices Code*.

2. Planning of wildlife habitat strips

- Strips should ideally link areas reserved from harvesting (i.e. streamside reserves, informal and formal reserves, non-commercial or non-production forests). Decisions on the location of strips are hence best made after assessing the location of other areas that will not be harvested.
- Older stands of forest should be retained in the strip rather than regrowth. However, if an area is mainly regrowth, then strips should still be planned and the retained forest allowed to grow beyond the age of harvesting.
- Retained strips should capture the range of abiotic and biotic factors found in a region (i.e. geology, elevation, slope, aspect, drainage and vegetation).
- Strips may be primarily located in gullies but must also include areas on slopes and ridges. Strips should join to form a continuous network of forest excluded from further harvest.
- Strips should be provided every 3–5 kilometres through wood production zones.
- The width of the strip should be maximised whenever possible. Strips should be a minimum 100 metres. In some areas, natural vegetation boundaries can be used to delineate strip boundaries.
- Forests with high faunal values (i.e. important to threatened or RFA priority species) should be over-represented compared with other forest types.
- A class 1 or 2 watercourse should not run through a strip. New strips should be preferentially placed on one side of these larger watercourses to ensure an effective width is retained.
- Smaller watercourses (i.e. class 3 and 4) may run through a strip.
- New strips should be sited so that roads do not run through the middle of them. If strips are placed alongside an existing road then consideration should be given to widening the strip. This will ensure the effective functioning of the strip as a habitat reserve and reduce edge effects.
- The location of strips should be considered permanent. However, there are circumstances where it may be prudent to modify the position of a strip to ensure it can be adequately

protected during forestry operations including burning. While this situation should be avoided, where it is considered necessary to shift a strip, contact the FPA Biodiversity Program staff for advice. Forestry Tasmania has an internal system to ensure that strips are not moved inappropriately and that the level of overall protection of forest is maintained.

3. Management of wildlife habitat strips

- Where roads are to be constructed through a strip, the width of the road should be minimised. As a guide, roads constructed through a strip should ideally be no greater than 15 metres wide. Roads should not pass longitudinally through the strip. Trees in the path of the road should be felled parallel to the road. The crossing of strips by roads should be minimised. As a guide, the minimum distance between road crossings should be no less than 1 kilometre.
- Strips should be protected from high intensity and extensive regeneration burns. Lower intensity and patchy regeneration or fuel reduction burns may enter a strip.
- Machinery should not enter the strip, except for road building and other practices consistent with these guidelines.
- No trees shall be felled into or out of the strip unless authorised by an FPO. Where this occurs accidentally, advice should be sought from the FPO as to whether the tree should be removed or left in place. The decision on removing a tree should be based on the relative merits of doing more damage to the undergrowth if the tree is removed versus the possibility of the dead head of the tree being a site of ignition from any burning in the coupe.
- Strips should be located on the edge of a coupe. Coupes should be dispersed so that those on either side of the wildlife habitat strip are not both logged until one has regrown to at least 5 metres in height.
- Conversion of native forest to plantation or agriculture should only occur on one side of an established strip. Where this is unavoidable, consideration should be given to widening the strip (e.g. by 50%) to reduce edge effects (changes to light levels, weed invasion, etc.) and to ensure the adequate functioning of the strip as a habitat reserve.
- Strips should be protected from other forms of disturbance such as damage by cable lines etc. Where cables are required to cross a strip, advice should be sought from FPA Biodiversity Program staff.

The above set of guidelines can be applied when updating existing planning maps. It is recommended that, wherever possible, the position of existing strips is modified to meet the criteria above.

Further reading

Taylor, RJ 1991, *Fauna Conservation in Production Forests in Tasmania*, Forest Practices Unit, Hobart, Tasmania.

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2.1	Feb 2011	Nina Roberts	Note: the wording of this document is identical to that approved by the FPA Biodiversity Manager in early 2010, except for the addition of document control information.