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## Fact Sheet

### Using the Native Vegetation Regulation 2013 Self-Assessable Codes

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# Determining distances from water bodies

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When applying the native vegetation self-assessable codes, you will need to follow specific requirements relating to distance from a water body.

This will help to maintain vegetation around water bodies, which is important for:

- maintaining water quality by stabilising soil
- preserving biodiversity in and around the water body
- linking biodiversity in other parts of the landscape.

*The presence of a water body within your clearing site will influence the methods available for clearing native vegetation on your property.*

*To protect water quality and maintain biodiversity on your land, it is important to identify the key features of a water body and to determine critical distances where the limits to clearing methods apply.*

*The native vegetation self-assessable codes outline specific requirements relating to clearing near a water body. These are:*

- **Paddock tree self-assessable code** – the removal of paddock trees within 30 metres of water bodies is not allowed
- **Invasive Native Scrub self-assessable code** – the clearing types that can be used within 100 metres and within 30 metres of water bodies are limited
- **Thinning self-assessable code** – thinning within 30 metres of water bodies can only be done by clearing individual trees and shrubs with no disturbance to soil and groundcover.

## Types of water bodies

For the purposes of the three self-assessable codes listed above, there are three types of water bodies:

- Incised watercourse means a stream or river of Strahler order 3 or larger with a visible, incised channel (see Figure 1 and the explanation of the Strahler system below).
- Wetlands means any type of shallow body of water, other than a floodplain (e.g. marsh, billabong, swamp or sedgeland) that is:
  - inundated cyclically, intermittently or permanently with water, and
  - vegetated with wetland plant communities.
- Estuary means:
  - any part of a river whose level is periodically or intermittently affected by coastal tides, or
  - any lake or other partially enclosed body of water that is periodically or intermittently open to the sea.

## Determining stream order using the Strahler system

You can use the Strahler stream ordering system to determine the stream order of a water body on your property. The Strahler system assigns a waterway an order according to the number of its tributaries, as follows:

- Starting at the top of a catchment, any water body which has no other water bodies flowing into it is classed as a **first order stream** (1).
- When two first order streams join, the stream becomes a **second order stream** (2).
- If a second order stream is joined by a first order stream, it remains a **second order stream** (2).
- When two second order streams join, they become a **third order stream** (3), and so on.

Figure 1 shows an example of how the Strahler stream ordering system would be applied across a river and stream system.

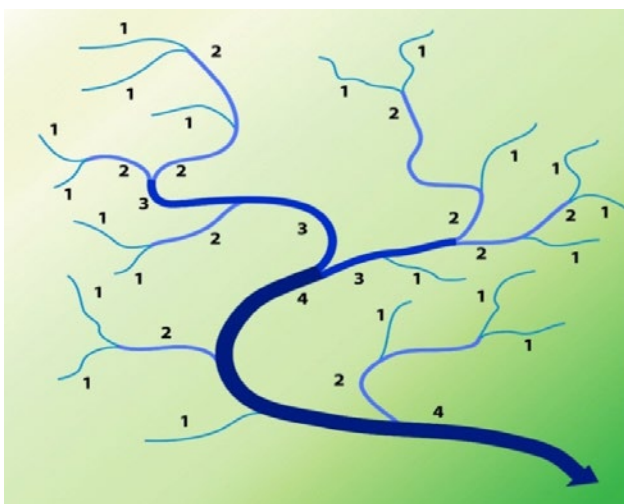


Figure 1: Strahler stream order

You can access an online map that shows whether streams of order 3 or above exist on your property from the online tools at [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/onlinetools.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/onlinetools.htm), or you can contact your Local Land Services for assistance.

## Determining distances from incised watercourses, estuaries or wetlands

The distance from an **incised watercourse** is measured from the top of the bank. If there is no visible channel, it is not considered an incised watercourse.

**Figure 2: Measuring distance from the bank of an incised watercourse**



The distance from an **estuary** is measured from the high water mark. The high water mark is the highest point that is reached by water during high tide.

The distance from a **wetland** is measured from the edge of the wetland. The edge of a wetland that is cyclically or intermittently inundated can be difficult to determine. Wetlands are typically described by their ability to support animals and plants that need water to complete all or part of their lifecycle. Many wetlands also contain hydric soils, which are soils that have formed in the presence of water. When considering the position of the edge of a wetland, you should consider the extent of water inundation, the presence of indicator vegetation species, and also the soil type.

## More information

For more information, visit the Office of Environment and Heritage website at: [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/)

On this website, you can download the Regulation and further information that explains the changes to the Regulation.

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