

The 1998 Management Plan contains a watercourse management policy which is quoted here:

“D.4. Watercourse Management Policies and Programs

RIPARIAN AREAS

From the perspective of overall resource value and diversity, riparian areas exceed all others in importance. Riparian zones provide an area for concentrated use by terrestrial wildlife, the filtering of runoff and floodwater, nesting and breeding sites for a variety of animals and a focal point for human recreation within the SFMA. In addition, under long-term forest management riparian areas:

- provide protected corridors for travel and shelter connectivity to adjacent riparian areas and reserve areas with the SFMA;
- provide protected corridors for migration to seasonal ranges outside or inside the SFMA;
- provide specific micro-climate structures for the more diverse habitats often found along waterways, lakes and ponds;
- complement, and sometimes complete, the habitat provided by reserves;
- allow some areas to proceed in development toward late-successional stages and multi-cohort stands.

We feel our riparian areas, in thoughtful combination with our reserve areas and adjacent forest management, can form structural entities and habitat types that transcend the common perception of a thin strip of reserve trees along a stream; the so called ‘buffer strip’. It is our intent to blend active timber management with reserves and riparian areas to provide a full range of native habitats characteristic of the SFMA.

Applying this approach, we have abandoned the traditional pre-determined distance approach to establishing riparian boundaries and instead use on-site indicators to drive the location of riparian boundaries. This has resulted in a highly variable streamside buffer on all 3rd order and higher streams (i.e. Webster Stream, Wadleigh Brook, Brayley Brook, Murphy Brook). Some site indicators used to establish riparian lines are:

- a distinct break in slope or grade approaching the stream or pond signifying a departure from an upland type;
- a change in forest type from typical upland species (red spruce, northern hardwoods) to wetland types (fir, cedar);
- evidence of travel pathways for wildlife;
- intact developed structure providing connective pathways between less developed structure;
- aesthetic sensitivity with recreational corridors;
- uniform forest structures coincident with existing significant wetlands or heath bogs (black spruce flats, cedar swamps);
- obvious concentration areas for wildlife and wetland habitat, i.e. the confluence of 3rd and 4th order streams.

These guidelines have resulted in the definition of riparian boundaries determined by landscape features, consequently, riparian lines can vary from 50’ to well over 1000’ from the shorelines of waterbodies.

In the SFMA, we refer to riparian zones as “semi-protected”. Sensitive and thoughtful harvesting can be conducted within riparian areas without degradation of the structural features that provide protection to water quality resources and may be necessary at times to maintain or encourage vertical diversity in forest structure. At times, we expect that certain conditions - insect/disease damage, massive windthrow etc. - may prompt some level of harvest entry on some portions of our riparian areas. Under no circumstances do we envision extensive harvest, or even a complete salvage, of any riparian area. In general, our riparian areas serve a combined purpose in the development of wildlife habitat, protection of water quality, and the evolution of mature multi-story forest structure and in most cases are best left undisturbed.”