

Managing Stream Vegetation

Burning is not the Answer

Trees, shrubs and grasses in and around our rivers, creeks, lakes and dams are essential for healthy, productive farms and environments. They are important because they:

- bind and hold banks together;
- reduce erosion;
- provide shade, shelter, nesting and breeding sites for birds, frogs, fish, reptiles and other organisms;
- reduce water temperatures providing more suitable conditions for fish and other aquatic organisms;
- filter sediments, nutrients and pollutants;
- help maintain good water quality;
- improve stock health and productivity.



The endangered Southern pygmy perch relies on stream vegetation.

Why do people burn stream vegetation?

People burn stream vegetation because they want to;

- make things look tidy;
- remove material that may get washed downstream in floods;
- reduce fire risks;
- create green pick for stock feed;
- control pest animals and weeds.

These practices often do not achieve the benefits hoped for and the consequences certainly outweigh any short term benefits that might be gained.



Reed warblers nest only in stream vegetation

Impacts of burning

There are serious impacts from burning stream vegetation including:

- the burning alive of frogs, lizards and other native animals;
- destroying nests;
- creating large amounts of ash that can be harmful to stock and toxic to fish;
- destabilising creek beds and banks which results in damaging erosion.

Riparian areas are most vulnerable to weed invasion if they are degraded or bare – following fire, flood or weed removal. In effect the exact opposite of what most are trying to achieve.

Can I burn vegetation near waterbodies?

Burning vegetation is classified as “clearing” and specific requirements relate to clearing vegetation near a waterbody. You should seek

advice from Local Land Services, Office of Environment and Heritage and your local council before undertaking any clearing near waterways. This is important as the waterway may be classified as Protected Riparian Land.

The definition of what constitutes Protected Riparian Land depends on a number of factors which vary from place to place. Seeking expert advice ensures you do not place yourself at risk of prosecution. More information can be found at:

<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/vegetation/>



The endangered Yellow Spotted Bell Frog seeks refuge amongst Mat-rush

Management options

Managing riparian areas should be done strategically, considering the entire riparian zone. Our waterways are the life blood of our country and farms. We must actively manage and improve them to protect our vital water sources and the farms and wildlife that rely on them. You should seek advice about any activities you are considering that may disturb vegetation, soil or water.

Fire Risks

For information on how to prepare for bush fires visit the NSW Rural Fire Service website: <http://www.rfs.nsw.gov.au/plan-and-prepare>.

This site can assist with tips and information on how to prepare your home, family and yourself along with a link to completing your Bush Fire Survival Plan so that you know what you will do if there's a fire near you

Economic values

Scientific research and the experience of good land managers shows that a well managed riparian zone is an asset to be treasured. Healthy waterways benefits include;

- better stock health;
- higher productivity and greater profitability;
- higher land values.



Healthy systems support diverse vegetation and can increase ecological and economic productivity

For more information:

Your local Rural Fire Service office or phone 1800 679 737

Your nearest Local Land Services office or phone 1300 795 299

Office of Environment and Heritage 131 555