

## Advice Note 05: HCS and HCV–HCSA Assessments

8 October 2020

<b>NOTE-2020-05-01</b>	Defining patch connectivity for the purpose of completing steps 4 and 5 of the HCSA Patch Analysis Decision Tree
<b>Main Topic(s)</b>	Patch analysis, Connectivity
<b>Date published</b>	8 October 2020
<b>Date revised</b>	-
<b>Date(s) of applicability</b>	Applies for new assessments from 8 October 2020 and to assessment reports undergoing ALS evaluation and HCSA peer review as of this date.
<b>Document reference</b>	<p>HCSA Toolkit Module 5 (Version 2.0, August 2017):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Section A: Conservation science background and principles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Determining the thresholds for key characteristics of viable forest patches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Connectivity (Page 12), Corridors and stepping stones (Page 13)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Section B: HCS Forest Patch Analysis Decision Tree 2.0 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Step 4 (Page 28)</li> <li>○ Step 5 (Page 29)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Query / request for clarification</b>	
How is patch connectivity defined for both Steps 4 and 5 of the Patch Analysis Decision Tree, specifically regarding connectivity of patches through other patches as stepping stones?	
<b>Response by HCSA</b>	
<p>As per page 12 of HCSA Toolkit Module 5, two patches are considered connected if the distance between them measured edge-to-edge is less than 200m. It is therefore straightforward to determine if two patches are connected to each other. However, in the discussion of connectivity, it is noted that it is important to evaluate and consider many patches at the same time as well as linkages to the broader landscape. The concept of stepping stones is introduced and it is noted that if the configuration is conducive, a cluster of patches could provide stepping stones to larger patches.</p>	

Step 4 of the Decision Tree applies the concept of stepping stones for the process of identifying Low Priority Patches (LPPs) and Medium Priority Patches (MPPs) that create connectivity between High Priority Patches (HPPs). In this step, a single LPP or MPP may connect two HPPs if it is within 200m of both of them, but this does not have to be the case. Text for this step states

“Importantly, connectivity can be provided by multiple patches between HPPs and are thus collectively marked ‘indicative conserve’”. There is no limit to the number of LPPs and MPPs that are connected to each other to act as stepping stones and provide connectivity between two HPPs.

While connectivity to an HPP can be provided between multiple patches in Step 4, this doesn’t apply to Step 5. In Step 5, only patches that are themselves within 200m of an HPP or any large (>100 ha core) HCS forest or HCV forest areas, peatlands, or riparian areas within or adjacent to the proposed development area are marked for proposed conservation in this step. Other patches continue to Step 6.

There is a lack of clarity on this point in the toolkit, specifically in Figure 8 and text in Step 5 (Page 29) that refers to it. It is stated that two MPPs and an LPP in the figure (numbers 19, 20 & 21) are considered connected to an HPP (number 22) and marked for proposed conservation. However, this is only true for Patch 21, which can be seen to be within 200m of the HPP. However, it is correct in that Patches 19 and 20 are still marked for proposed conservation in this step because they are connected to a riparian area. This is not seen in Figure 8 but can be seen later in the toolkit in Figure 12 (Page 34).

Text in Step 5 refers to MPPs and LPPs that do not have “immediate connectivity” to HPPs. This term is not used elsewhere in the Decision Tree but is used to refer to connectivity where a patch is itself within 200m of an HPP or any large (>100 ha core) HCS forest or HCV forest areas, peatlands, or riparian area, and not connected via stepping stones as can occur in Step 4.

#### **About this HCSA Advice Note:**

The purpose of this document is to respond to technical queries that arise from the implementation of the HCSA methodology and the evaluation of HCSA and HCV-HCSA assessment reports. Queries are gathered through HCSA or HCVN and centralised in a query tracker. Then, subject area experts propose a response. Next, the query and draft response are shared with the HCSA Technical Panel for input. Finally, the advice note is updated accordingly and published.

If you have a technical query, please contact the HCSA Quality Assurance team:

[ga@highcarbonstock.org](mailto:ga@highcarbonstock.org)

If your query is related to an HCV-HCSA assessment currently under ALS evaluation, contact the ALS Quality Manager: [qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org](mailto:qualitymanager@hcvnetwork.org)