Threatened Fauna Adviser 2014
User Manual

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March 2014

FPA
FOREST PRACTICES AUTHORITY

Contents

Background

The Threatened Fauna Adviser (TFA) is a decision-support tool intended for use by those conducting biodiversity evaluations as part of the development of forest practices plans (FPPs) for activities covered by the Tasmanian forest practices system in accordance with the procedures for the management of threatened species agreed between the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water & Environment (DPIPWE) and the Forest Practices Authority (FPA), under section D3.3 of the *Forest Practices Code* (for a full copy of the 'agreed procedures', follow this link).

The primary objective for the management of threatened species in areas covered by the forest practices system is to contribute to the maintenance of habitat and populations of threatened species throughout their ranges and over time. The TFA provides the planner with recommended management actions (recommendations) to incorporate into FPPs for specific forestry operations.

Recommendations are provided for species currently listed as threatened on the Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* and the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* that are considered to be affected by activities covered by the Tasmanian forest practices system. The recommended actions are based on current knowledge and expert opinion and they may change as new information becomes available. The recommended actions for individual species are to be applied unless alternative management actions are accepted by the FPA in consultation with DPIPWE as a way of meeting the management objective for the species.

The management of threatened species under the *Forest Practices Code* is part of a broader legal and policy framework for the conservation of threatened species. The code defines the contribution that landowners should make to the conservation of non-wood values by way of a prescribed 'duty of care'. The recommended actions under the TFA and other relevant planning tools are to be individually and collectively integrated and prioritised during the planning process by Forest Practices Officers to ensure that the most effective and practical outcomes are achieved within the duty of care thresholds of the code. The management of values beyond the duty of care thresholds in the code can only be achieved through voluntary agreement with the landowner or through other legislative mechanisms. The *Nature Conservation Act 2002* provides that affected landowners may apply for compensation where the FPA has made a decision with respect to a forest practices plan that imposes constraints beyond the duty of care for threatened species or threatened native vegetation communities.

The TFA captures current scientific and expert knowledge with respect to each species. It may be updated in accordance with the agreed procedures. Forest Practices Officers and forest managers will be informed of substantial changes to the TFA (e.g. new species, changes to decision-pathways and recommendations) but not of minor changes (e.g. typographic corrections).

The TFA was first developed during the late 1990s/early 2000s. The first fully endorsed version was released on 13 March 2002. The current version wholly replaces the 2002 version, and should be referred to as the 2014 version (the year in which it was endorsed for use by the Board of the Forest Practices Authority and DPIPWE).

See the Acknowledgments link in the online help file for a list of the people involved in developing the current version of the TFA.

Using the Threatened Fauna Adviser

The TFA is a web-based system and will run effectively on any internet platform, and on both PC and Mac operating systems. An unlimited number of users can access the online TFA at any one time. Users have an unlimited session time but inactivity at the user's end will create a time-out after 10 minutes and the user will be prompted to restart their session.

The TFA is a publicly available product and does not require password-protected user names or logon credentials. Users of the TFA are required, however, to agree to a set of terms of use (which appear at each and every session of use of the TFA). Users must also enter a user name and operation location – these details (and the date and time of use) appear in the footer of the recommendations delivered after following the decision-pathways.

Unlike the previous version of the TFA, no user-end installation is required. The user must navigate to http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/tfa to first access the online version of the TFA. It is recommended that users bookmark the website to their favourites and/or create a desktop shortcut.

The new version of the TFA appears similar to the 2002 version. It has been programmed using the same (but updated) software (XpertRule) but now runs through a web server. The general layout of the TFA is such that the 'exit', 'back', 'continue' and 'help' buttons are in approximately the same position on each page to allow easier navigation.

For each species included in the TFA there are a series of 'decision-pathways' that vary in complexity (the decision-pathways are similar to a dichotomous plant identification key but with options for 'yes/no', 'multiple choice' and 'user-defined' choices). Each branch of the decision pathway is presented to the user as a dialog screen. Some dialog screens simply contain text information and a link to the next screen, while others incorporate additional windows that require the user to select an option. Selection of an option may lead directly to a report (showing the recommendations) or to additional dialog screens requiring further option selections.

The TFA requires the user to be appropriately trained in the use of the TFA, and in the identification and management of habitat for threatened fauna within wood production forests. The TFA should not be used (or interpreted by) people who have not received such training. Forest industry planners receive this training from the Forest Practices Authority during courses (e.g. the Forest Practices Officer Course, Fauna Management Course) and species-specific or issue-specific field days. After receiving the appropriate training, users can use the TFA following the steps outlined below.

Running a Threatened Fauna Adviser session

There are three basic processes that need to be completed for threatened fauna evaluations;

1. Identifying species, range and habitat
2. Obtaining a recommendation, and
3. Applying the recommendation

The online version of the TFA is used in the second step to obtain appropriate management recommendations for the operation.

Step 1: Identifying species, range and habitat

Users should first access an appropriate database to identify if the proposed FPP or other planning unit area is known to, or likely to, support threatened fauna species. The Forest Practices Authority recommends the use of its online Biodiversity Values Database (BVD), which provides information on threatened species known localities, predicted ranges and potential habitat. It is the user's responsibility to ensure that the most up to date information is used in planning.

A field assessment will be required in almost all cases to determine the presence, extent and suitability of habitat (e.g. potential vs. significant), confirm sites (e.g. precise location of a nest/den record), and identify management issues (e.g. potential disturbance to a nest from roading, carting, harvesting, plantation management etc).

Note that a proposed FPP or other planning unit area may support several species of threatened fauna.

Step 2: Obtaining a recommendation

Once the user has determined whether or not the plan area contains a known locality for a threatened species and/or potential habitat and the range category (e.g. known, core, potential range) using the Biodiversity Values Database, they should navigate to the TFA's initial screen by

1) typing in the web address (http://www.fpa.tas.gov.au/tfa), or
2) clicking on a desktop shortcut to the address, or
3) clicking on the link from the Biodiversity tab on the FPA website. The initial screen is embedded in the FPA website and looks like this;

On the opening screen, click on the 'Continue' button (lower right hand side) to progress.

On the next screen (user obligations and agreement), read the text on the caveats and user obligations and click on the 'Continue' button if you agree to the terms of use (see image on next page). If you do not agree to these conditions then click on 'Exit' to exit the TFA. It is important that these terms are read and the step is completed.
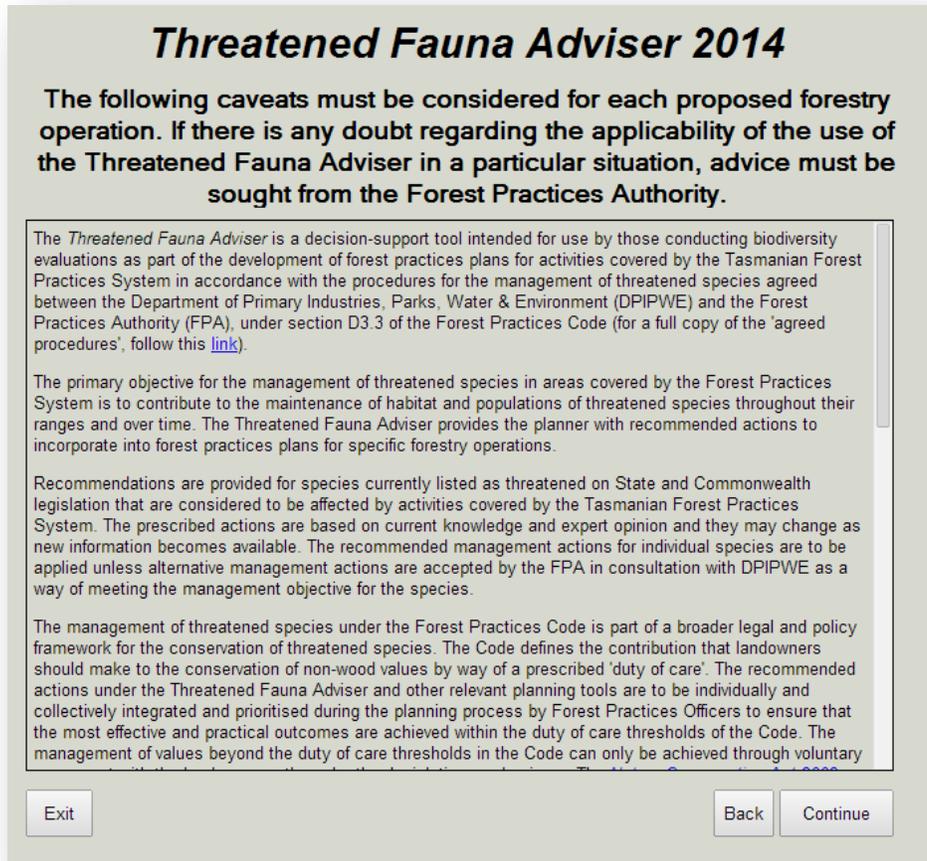
On the next screen, select the operation type most applicable to your situation (in most cases, this will be 'Forestry operations'), then click 'Continue'.
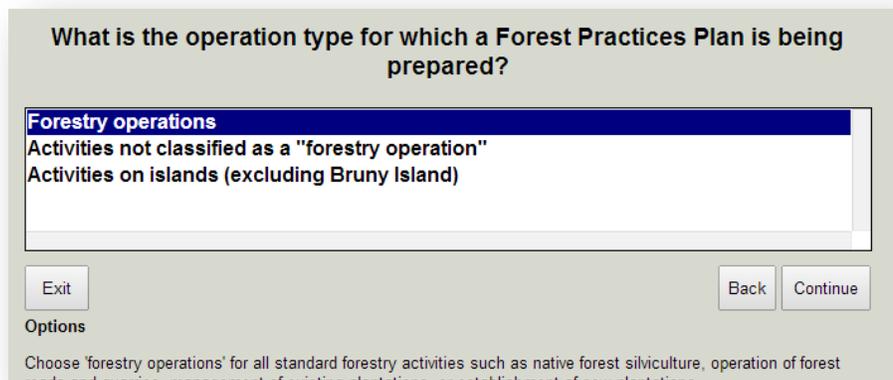
On the next screen, enter a user name and location (this should be detailed enough to allow both yourself and auditors to be able to track who used the TFA, and what coupe/operation/FPP it was used for). Click 'Continue' when these details have been completed (see image on next page).

On the next screen, select the species for which you need to obtain a recommendation, then click 'Continue'. You can scroll down the list by using the scroll bar on the right hand side of the list. You may only select one species at a time. Note that you will need to return to this screen for each of the species that may be affected by the proposed forestry operation. You can return for subsequent species by clicking on the 'Back' button, or by clicking on the 'Same operation different species' button at the bottom of each final recommendation.

At each of the subsequent screens, select the appropriate option at each question screen and click on the 'Continue' button until a recommendation is delivered. See the following images for examples of questions you may encounter in the 'decision pathways' for each species;

A recommendation is delivered when all the questions along the pathway for a species have been answered. Recommendations are numbered and include a pathway trail as a subheading, which shows the decisions made along the pathway for each species. Use the scroll bar on the right hand side to view the entire wording.

The recommendation can be printed by clicking on the 'print' button at the bottom of the screen. This should print both the recommendation and the audit details (name and coupe details). Alternatively the on-screen text can also be copied and pasted to other documents. The print function appears to work best when using the Google Chrome browser (rather than Firefox, Internet Explorer or other alternative).

Step 3: Apply the recommendation

Forest Practices Officers must ensure that a certified forest practices plan includes all relevant actions required for threatened fauna. The recommendations delivered via the TFA should be used to develop management prescriptions appropriate to the operation and incorporated into the FPP. The recommended management action must be worded such that the action is clear to those responsible for implementing the FPP (e.g. contractor and supervisors). Note that transferring all of the wording from the TFA recommendation verbatim into an FPP may be inappropriate; selection and/or modification of phrasing is acceptable provided that the desired outcome is met. Further advice must be sought from the Forest Practices Authority if:

- endorsed or recommended actions cannot be implemented (for any reason)
- a variation is made to the FPP that affects threatened species, and the change is not covered by the FPP prescriptions or updated TFA recommendations (or they cannot be applied)
- additional threatened species values are identified in the FPP area after completing the biodiversity evaluation.

If agreement on management prescriptions cannot be reached by the FPO and FPA specialists, the FPO will refer the case to the CFPO for a determination. If the applicant for the FPP is aggrieved by the determination of the CFPO the applicant may lodge an appeal with the Forest Practices Tribunal pursuant to s.25 of the *Forest Practices Act 1985*.

Function buttons

Exit button

The exit button is located on the lower left hand side of most TFA screens. Clicking on the exit button brings up a prompt to ensure the user wishes to exit the TFA, and then on confirmation, terminates a TFA session. A new session of the TFA can be started by clicking on the refresh button or by re-entering the initial web address. If using the 'exit' button to finish a session, the user will need to re-enter the details of the user and operation for any subsequent sessions.

Help button

The help button is available on the lower right hand side of most screens of the TFA. This may be useful if you want to read up on the background to the TFA, refer to the Agreed Procedures, look up an abbreviation or definition, find the habitat descriptions for a species, or find references for further reading. If you have a query that is not answered by the help files, contact the FPA for further assistance.

Back button

The back button is located on the lower right hand side of most screens. It will take the user back by one screen on each click. It is useful when the user accidentally inputs the incorrect decision pathway choice, and needs to re-enter it. It can also be used to get back to the species selection screen to select a new species once a recommendation has been delivered for a species.

Continue button

The continue button is used to advance to the next screen, usually once a selection has been made.

Same operation different species button

The same operation different species button appears at the end of each recommendation to allow the user to navigate back to the species selection screen to follow a new species decision pathway.

Print button

The print button only appears on a final recommendation screen. Clicking on this button should bring up a print preview, allowing the user to set the printing details and print the recommendation wording and audit details.

OK button

The ok button only appears at the bottom of the screen after a recommendation. It has an identical function to the 'same operation, different species' button in sending the user back to the species selection screen.

Feedback

The Forest Practices Authority and DPIPWE will appreciate any feedback from users on the *Threatened Fauna Adviser* – please direct comments to:

Manager – Biodiversity Program

Forest Practices Authority

30 Patrick Street

Hobart, TAS 7000

03 6165 4090

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Appendix 1: Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used within the Threatened Fauna Adviser and this document:

BVD   Biodiversity Values Database – see TFM and FVD – this integrated database and GIS mapping product is being developed at the same time as the TFA review and will wholly replace the hard copy TFM and online FVD

CFPO   Chief Forest Practices Officer

DEWHA Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (previously known under various other names such as Department of Environment and Heritage), superseded during the preparation of this document by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPC)

DPIPWE Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Environment and Water, previously known as DPIWE (Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment) and DPIW (Department of Primary Industries and Water) and referred to as such in most documentation related to the present review (e.g. *Forest Practices Code*, old versions of the TFA, etc.) – DPIPWE is used throughout

EPBCA   Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

FPA   Forest Practices Authority

FPAC   Forest Practices Advisory Council

FPB   Forest Practices Board of the Forest Practices Authority but the abbreviation is most commonly applied to the previous name of the agency now referred to as FPA (see also FPU) and used in the present version of the TFA

FPC   *Forest Practices Code 2000*, sometimes referred to as the code

FPO   Forest Practices Officer

FPP   Forest Practices Plan

FPU   First name of the entity now known as the FPA (usually seen in terms such as FPU Senior Zoologist and various historical documents)

FT   Forestry Tasmania

FVD   Fauna Values Database – see TFM and BVD

IFS   Inland Fisheries Service, in some older documents referred to as the IFC, Inland Fisheries Commission

NVA   DPIPWE's Natural Values Atlas database (www.naturalvaluesatlas.tas.gov.au)

PAMA   Public Authority Management Agreement established under the provisions of the TSPA

PCAB   Policy and Conservation Assessment Branch, formerly Development and Conservation Assessment Branch (DCAB), of DPIPWE

PSC   Project Steering Committee for the review of the Threatened Fauna Adviser project, comprising: Sarah Munks (FPA), Phil Bell (TSS, DPIPWE), Clare Hawkins (TSS, DPIPWE), Karen Richards (FPA) and Fred Duncan (FPA, in part)

RFA   Tasmanian-Commonwealth *Regional Forest Agreement* signed in November 1997 and updated in 2005

TFA   Threatened Fauna Adviser

TFM   *Threatened Fauna Manual*, originally published as hard copy as the *Threatened Fauna Manual for Wood Production Forests in Tasmania* (Forest Practices Board 2001) and subsequently converted to an online database on FPA's web site and referred to as the Biodiversity Values Database (FPA 2011)

TSPA   Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*

TSS   Threatened Species Section of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (see DPIPWE); previously known as the Threatened Species Unit (TSU)

SAC   Scientific Advisory Committee established under the TSPA

UTAS   University of Tasmania

Document Control Log Table

Document summary information

Document name	**Threatened Fauna Adviser User Manual**
Version	0.2
Trim record	2014/022845
Owner	FPA
Author(s)	Dydee Mann
Release date	24.3.14
Release Approved by	CFPO
Release status	

Version control

Version	Date	Author(s)	Summary of changes
0.1	2012	Dan Livingston?	Draft 'how to use' notes in TFA help file
0.2	March 2014	Dydee Mann	Incorporation of notes into user manual document, addition of screen shots, logos, web links, photos.

Stages required for release outside FPA

Category of advice (A1, A2, B1, B2, B3 or C):		C
Stages	**Required/not required**	**Completed (date)**
Specialist	**Required**	**24.3.14**
Line Manager	**Required**	**24.3.14**
Peer/FPO/stakeholder review (**FPA staff**)	**Not required**	
CFPO	**Required**	**24.3.14**
FPAC		
Board		