

FARMING & WATER SCOTLAND



Ditch Clearing

Maintaining field drainage systems can help to keep your soil in good condition, reduce erosion and improve farm efficiency.

Maintenance of field drainage systems, including any work to remove sediments, vegetation or debris **from a field drain or completely man-made ditch** can be done at any time without contacting SEPA.

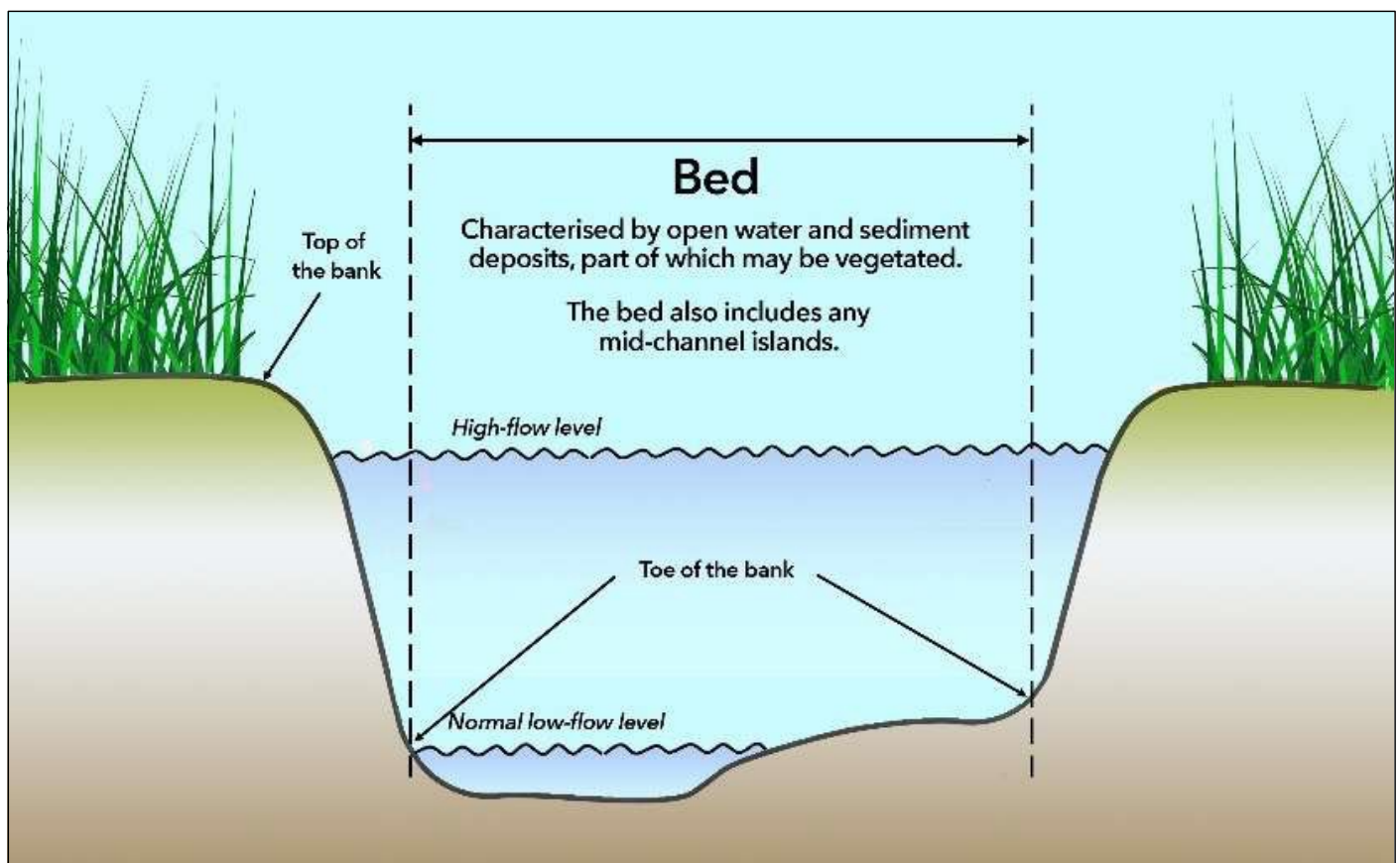


Figure 14.1. Watercourse/ditch features.

Sediment, vegetation or debris can be removed from any surface water that has been artificially straightened or canalised and has an average bed width of less than one metre.

Where carrying out such works you **must not**:

- Increase the erosion risk to the bed or banks.
- Unnecessarily remove vegetation from the bank.
- Dispose of vegetation into the channel.
- Widen the channel or heighten the banks (Figure 14.1).
- Undertake work within the channel during periods in which fish are likely to be spawning nor in the period between any such spawning and the subsequent emergence of the juvenile fish – May to September is usually the best time for such work to be carried out but you should check with your local fishery trust.
- Cause pollution of the water environment. Consider using mitigation measures (such as straw bales or silt fences) to trap sediments and to minimise silt pollution downstream. Work should be undertaken in a downstream direction.
- Create any steps or sudden changes in the level of the channel bed. The bed **must** be graded to achieve a consistent level.

To remove sediment from any un-straightened river, burn or ditch, or if the channel is more than 1 metre wide you **must** contact SEPA to check the level of authorisation required before any work is carried out.

Definitions:

Bed Width – The straight-line distance that is between the opposite bank toes of a river burn or ditch, and which spans the bed of the river, burn or ditch, including any exposed bars and vegetated islands.

Channel Width – The straight-line distance that is between opposite bank tops of a river, burn or ditch and which spans the bed of a river, burn or ditch, including any exposed bars and vegetated islands.

Minor Watercourse – A watercourse not shown on the 1:50,000 scale Ordnance Survey maps (Landranger series).

