

Subject: : Tips and Tricks

Topic: : guesing width of small streams from maps

Re: guesing width of small streams from maps

Author: : Tups

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URL:

Jack: A 2nd order stream can't technically flow into a 1st order stream, rather a 1st order will always flow into a larger order stream, not necessarily a 2nd order. In a case where a 1st order flows into a 2nd order, the 2nd order remains a 2nd order stream. The 1st order has no bearing on the 2nd order stream's designation. However, where a 2nd order intersects with another 2nd order, the stream becomes a 3rd order. When a 2nd order flows into a 3rd order, the 3rd order remains a 3rd order. etc.

I believe this system of nomenclature was devised by a geologist named Strahler in the 1950's. It's simply a way to identify streams as they flow down from the mountaintop, or highest elevation. It can't tell us anything about the absolute size or structure of the stream. In the Ridge and Valley and Alleghany Plateau provinces in PA, a 1st order stream is usually a step-across channel. In the Rocky Mtns, a first order might be 20 or 30 feet wide. It's all relative to the landscape.