

Scoring Road-Stream Crossings as Part of the North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC)

Adopted by the NAACC Steering Committee
November 10, 2015

INTRODUCTION

The North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative (NAACC) was launched in 2015 with a rapid assessment protocol for evaluating aquatic passability at road-stream crossings and an online database (<https://www.streamcontinuity.org/cdb2>) for storing and scoring data collected using this protocol. Two scoring systems are proposed to evaluate aquatic passability at road-stream crossings. The first is a coarse screen for use in classifying crossings into one of three categories: “Full AOP” (Aquatic Organism Passage), “Partial AOP,” and “No AOP.” The second system is an algorithm for computing an aquatic passability score, ranging from 0 (low) to 1 (high), for each road-stream crossing. These two scoring systems are not particular to any taxonomic or functional group but instead seek to evaluate passability for the full range of aquatic organisms likely to be found in rivers and streams.

NAACC COARSE SCREEN

Table 1 below identifies characteristics and conditions that allow crossings to be classified as providing “Full AOP,” “Reduced AOP,” or “No AOP.”

Table 1. NAACC Coarse Screen

Metric	Flow Condition	Crossing Classification		
		Full AOP	Reduced AOP	No AOP
		<i>If all are true</i>	<i>If any are true</i>	<i>If any are true</i>
Inlet Grade		At Stream Grade	Inlet Drop or Perched	
Outlet Grade		At Stream Grade		Cascade, Free Fall onto Cascade
Outlet Drop to Water Surface		= 0		≥ 1 ft
Outlet Drop to Water Surface/ Outlet Drop to Stream Bottom				> 0.5
Inlet or Outlet Water Depth	Typical-Low	> 0.3 ft		< 0.3 ft w/Outlet Drop to Water Surface > 0
	Moderate	> 0.4 ft		< 0.4 ft w/Outlet Drop to Water Surface > 0
Structure Substrate Matches Stream		Comparable or Contrasting		
Structure Substrate Coverage		100%	< 100%	
Physical Barrier Severity		None	Minor or Moderate	Severe

The primary objective of the coarse screen is to identify those crossings that are likely to be a barrier to most or all species and those that are likely to provide something close to full aquatic organism passage. If it is necessary to get a better feel for how bad those crossing are that are labeled as “reduced AOP” one can use the numeric scoring system.

NAACC NUMERIC SCORING SYSTEM

The numeric scoring algorithm is based on the opinions of experts who decided both the relative importance of all the available predictors of passability as well as a way to score each predictor. Scoring involves three steps: (1) generating a component score for each predictor variable, (2) combining these predictions with a weighted average to generate a composite score for the crossing, and (3) assigning a final score based on the minimum of the composite score or the component score for the *outlet drop* variable.

Variables Used

Crossing assessments are generally done during “typical low-flow conditions.” Some variables are important for assessing conditions at the time of the survey; others provide indirect evidence of likely conditions at higher flows.

Inlet Grade: The position of the structure invert relative to the stream bottom at the inlet.

Outlet Drop: Outlet drop is based on the variable *Outlet Drop to Water Surface* unless the value for *Water Depth Matches Stream* = “Dry” in which case outlet drop is based on the variable *Outlet Drop to Stream Bottom*.

Physical Barriers: This variable covers a wide variety of circumstances ranging from obstructions to dewatered culverts or bridge cells that represent physical barriers to aquatic organism passage.

Constriction: The relative width of the crossing compared to the width of the stream. “Severe” = <50%, “Moderate” = 50-100%; other options include “Spans Only Bankfull/Active Channel” and “Spans Full Channel & Banks.” *Constriction* is an indirect indicator of potential velocity issues at higher flows.

Water Depth: Water depth in the structure relative to water depths found in the natural channel at the time of survey.

Water Velocity: Water velocity in the structure relative to water velocities found in the natural channel at the time of survey.

Scour Pool: Presence/absence of a scour pool at the crossing outlet and size relative to the natural stream channel. *Scour Pool* is an indirect indicator of potential velocity issues at higher flows. *Scour pool* is included solely as an indicator of velocities at higher flows. It is not based on the effects of the pool itself which can actually be positive for fish passage.

Substrate Matches Stream: An assessment of whether the substrate in the structure matches the substrate in the natural stream channel. *Substrate Matches Stream* is used to evaluate how a discontinuity in substrate might inhibit passage for species that either use substrate as the medium for travel (e.g., mussels) or require certain types of substrate for cover during movements (e.g., crayfish, salamanders, juvenile fish).

Substrate Coverage: Degree to which a crossing structure is covered by substrate. *Substrate Coverage* is directly related to passability for some aquatic species that require substrate or that tend to avoid areas that lack cover. It is also an important element of roughness that can create areas of low-velocity water (boundary layers) utilized by weak-swimming organisms. *Substrate Coverage* is also an indirect indicator of potential velocity issues at higher flows.

Openness: Cross-sectional area of the structure opening divided by the structure length (distance between inlet and outlet) measured in feet. *Openness* is calculated for both the inlet and outlet and the lower value is assigned to the structure. If there are multiple structures at a crossing the value for the structure with the highest *Openness* is assigned to the crossing as a whole. Turtles are believed to be affected by the *Openness* of a crossing structure; other species may be affected as well.

Height: Maximum height of the crossing structure. This variable is parameterized so that it only comes into play for very small structures.

Outlet Armoring: Presence/absence of streambed armoring (e.g., riprap, asphalt, concrete) at the outlet and the relative amount of armoring. Armoring is considered “extensive” if the length (upstream to downstream) of the streambed that is armored is greater or equal to half the bankfull width of the natural stream channel. *Outlet Armoring* is an indirect indicator of potential velocity issues at higher flows.

Internal Structures: Presence/absence of structures inside a culvert or bridge (e.g. weirs, baffles, supports). The *Internal Structures* variable is used in the scoring algorithm as it relates to the potential for creating turbulence within a crossing structure. To the extent that *Internal Structures* physically block the movement of aquatic organisms it is covered by the *Physical Barriers* variable.

Step 1: Component Scores

The component scores are not meant to equate to passability. In each case the component score is intended to cover the full range of problems (assessable by our protocol) associated with that variable: from 0 (worst case) to 1 (best case). For *inlet grade*, having an inlet drop or perched inlet is the worst case among the options, thus they score "0." This is not meant to say that all structures with inlet drops are impassible. The effect of *inlet grade* on passability scores is controlled by the weight it is given in computing the composite score (see Step 2 below).

Scoring categorical predictors is simply a matter of assigning a score for each possible category. Table 2 lists all of the categorical predictors and the scores associated with each category.

Scoring continuous predictors requires a function to convert the predictor to a score. There are three continuous predictors and three associated functions. The functional forms used were chosen because they have shapes desired by the expert team or because they fit the series of points specified by the expert team. Appendix A includes the r code defining each of these functions (“x” is the measured value for each variable).

The scoring equation for *Openness* is:

$$(1) s_o = a(1 - e^{-kx(1-d)})^{1/(1-d)}$$

Where S_o is the score for openness, $a=1$, $k=15$, and $d = 0.62$ when openness is recorded in feet.

The equation for Height is:

$$(2) s_h = \min\left(\frac{ax^2}{b^2 + x^2}, 1\right)$$

Where S_h is the component score for height, $a = 1.1$, and $b=2.2$ when height is recorded in feet.

The equation for Outlet Drop is:

$$(3) s_{od} = 1 - \frac{ax^2}{b^2 + x^2}$$

Where S_{od} is the Outlet Drop component score, $a=1.029412$, and $b=0.51449575$ when outlet drop is recorded in feet.

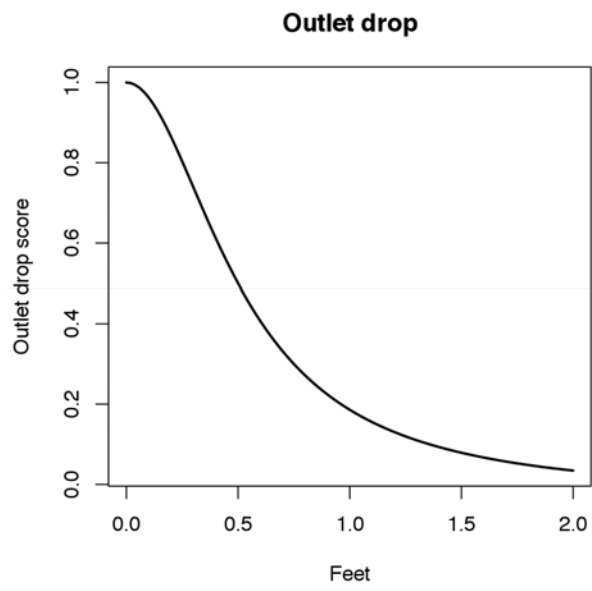
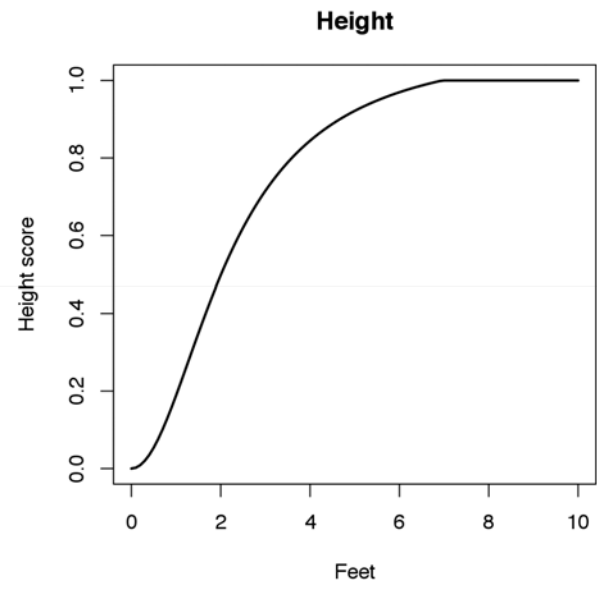
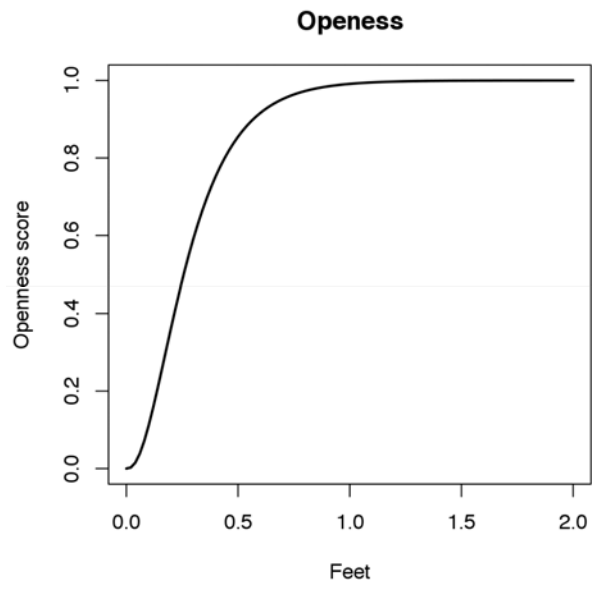


Figure 1. Continuous predictor variables

Table 2. Component scores for categorical variables used in calculating the crossing score

parameter	level	score
Constriction	severe	0
Constriction	moderate	0.5
Constriction	spans only bankfull/active channel	0.9
Constriction	spans full channel and banks	1
Inlet grade	at stream grade	1
Inlet grade	inlet drop	0
Inlet grade	perched	0
Inlet grade	clogged/collapsed/submerged	1
Inlet grade	unknown	1
Internal structures	none	1
Internal structures	baffles/weirs	0
Internal structures	supports	0.8
Internal structures	other	1
Outlet armoring	extensive	0
Outlet armoring	not extensive	0.5
Outlet armoring	none	1
Physical barriers	none	1
Physical barriers	minor	0.8
Physical barriers	moderate	0.5
Physical barriers	severe	0
Scour pool	large	0
Scour pool	small	0.8
Scour pool	none	1
Substrate coverage	none	0
Substrate coverage	25%	0.3
Substrate coverage	50%	0.5
Substrate coverage	75%	0.7
Substrate coverage	100%	1
Substrate matches stream	none	0
Substrate matches stream	not appropriate	0.25
Substrate matches stream	contrasting	0.75
Substrate matches stream	comparable	1
Water depth	no (significantly deeper)	0.5
Water depth	no (significantly shallower)	0
Water depth	yes (comparable)	1
Water depth	dry (stream also dry)	1
Water velocity	no (significantly faster)	0
Water velocity	no (significantly slower)	0.5
Water velocity	yes (comparable)	1
Water velocity	dry (stream also dry)	1

Some notes about the component scores

1. The option "clogged/collapsed/submerged" for *inlet grade* is an option surveyors use to indicate that it was not possible to measure the structure's dimensions. If the inlet is clogged or collapsed enough to affect passability it will be covered under *physical barriers*. This is why it receives a "1" instead of a "0", because problems associated with this option are covered by the *physical barriers* variable.
2. The rationale for giving a component score of "1" to "unknown" for *inlet grade* is similar to that for "clogged/collapsed/submerged." It is hard to know how to interpret "unknown." However, if conditions at the inlet are creating a physical barrier to passage it will be covered under *physical barriers*.
3. We included *inlet grade* as a variable in addition to *physical barriers* because inlet drops create both velocity and physical barrier (jump barrier) issues. The physical barrier issues are covered by the *physical barriers* variable. The *inlet grade* variable captures the velocity issues at the inlet. Perched inlets can create depth issues at low flows (if water can't get into the structure inlet). These may not be apparent at the time of the survey. Thus, the presence of a perched inlet is a concern even if it doesn't represent a physical barrier ("dry") at the time when the survey is conducted.
4. The variable *internal structures* is included to account for turbulence issues. There is likely to be turbulence associated with weirs and baffles when these are included inside crossing structures. If they also create physical barriers they will be covered by the *physical barriers* variable. They are often included in structures to help aquatic organism passage but they sometimes do more harm than good and may be good for some species while creating problems for others. The inclusion of well-designed weirs or baffles is likely to improve the component scores for water depth and water velocity. They get docked a little in our scoring system for introducing turbulence.
5. It is difficult to know how to score the "other" option under *internal structures* because it is difficult to know what, if any, impact these other structures will have on turbulence. If, however, they represent a physical barrier they will be covered under the *physical barriers* variable.

Step 2: Weighted Composite Scores

An expert team of nine people provided input on how the variables should be weighted based on best professional judgement. The weights used with the component scores are listed in table 3. The weights are simply the means of the nine weights for each variable provided by the experts. We display the weights out to three decimal places not to suggest that we know the weights to this level of precision but to reduce overall error in the model by not introducing an additional source of error (rounding error). The composite score is the sum of the products of each component score and its weight.

Table 3. Weights associated with each parameter in the scoring algorithm.

<u>parameter</u>	<u>weight</u>
Outlet drop	0.161
Physical barriers	0.135
Constriction	0.090
Inlet grade	0.088
Water depth	0.082
Water velocity	0.080
Scour pool	0.071
Substrate matches stream	0.070
Substrate coverage	0.057
Openness	0.052
Height	0.045
Outlet armoring	0.037
Internal structures	0.032

Step 3: Final Aquatic Passability Score

The final Aquatic Passability Score is the lower of either the composite score or the *Outlet Drop* component score. The rationale for this is that although many factors can affect aquatic organism passage, when an outlet drop is above a certain size it becomes the predominant factor that determines passability.

$$\text{Aquatic Passability Score} = \text{Min}[\text{Composite Score}, \text{Outlet Drop score}]$$

Mapping Aquatic Passability Scores

For mapping purposes, we assigned narrative descriptors for different ranges of aquatic passability as follows.

Descriptor	Aquatic Passability Score(s)
No barrier	1.0
Insignificant barrier	0.80 – 0.99
Minor barrier	0.60 – 0.79
Moderate barrier	0.40 – 0.59
Significant barrier	0.20 – 0.39
Severe barrier	0.00 – 0.19

People often ask about the relationship between these categories and actual passability for fish and other aquatic organisms. At this point the relationship is unknown and we regard it as a fruitful area for future research. The concept of aquatic passability is complicated and includes: variation in the swimming and leaping abilities of individuals within a species (what proportion of the population can pass), variability in passage requirements for a broad diversity of species that inhabit rivers and streams (what proportion of species can pass), and the timing of passability (for what proportion of the year is the structure passable).

For now, the best way to consider the aquatic passability scores is that they represent the degree to which crossings deviate from an ideal. We assume that those crossings that are very close to the ideal (scores > 0.6) will present only a minor or insignificant barrier to aquatic organisms. Those structures that are farthest from the ideal (scores < 0.4) are likely to be either significant or severe barriers. These are, however, arbitrary distinctions imposed on a continuous scoring system and should be used with that in mind.

APPENDIX A - R code for continuous scoring functions.

```
#-----#
# define function for Openness score calculation
#-----#
calc.openness.score <- function(x){
  # Using von Bertalanffy functional form (Bolker pg 97)
  a = 1
  k = 15
  d=0.62
  return(a * (1-exp(-k*(1-d)*x))^(1/(1-d)))
  # note exp is based on e not 10.
}

#-----#
# Define Function for Calculating Height Scores
#-----#
calc.height.score <- function(x){
  a <- 1.1
  b <- 2.2
  # Use Holling Type II function (Bolker pg 92):
  result <- a*x^2/(b^2 + x^2)
  result[result > 1] <- 1 # Truncate results to 1
  return(result)
}

#-----#
# Define Function for Calculating Outlet Drop Scores
#-----#
calc.outlet.drop.score <- function(x){
  a <- 1.029412
  b <- 0.51449575
  score <- 1 - a*x^2/(b^2 + x^2)
  score[x > 36] <- 0
  return(score)
}
```