

Key Design Features

- Synthesizable, technology independent VHDL Core
- N-channel FIR filter core implemented as a systolic array for speed and scalability
- Support for one or more independent channels (8 maximum)
- Configurable and independent coefficient sets for each channel
- Configurable data width and number of taps
- Symmetric arithmetic rounding limits DC-bias problems
- Output saturation or wrap modes
- Much cheaper than implementing separate FIR filters in parallel as hardware resources are shared between all channels
- Supports 550 MHz+ sample rates (550/N MHz per channel)¹

Applications

- High-speed filtering applications where hardware resources are limited - e.g. when it becomes impractical to use multiple FIR filters in parallel
- Dual-channel inputs such as complex valued I/Q in digital communications systems
- Parallel DSP processor architectures
- General purpose FIR filters with odd or even numbers of taps
- Filters with arbitrary sets of coefficients (e.g. non-symmetrical)

Generic Parameters

Generic name	Description	Type	Valid range
num_channels	Number of filter channels (N)	integer	$1 \leq N \leq 8$
num_taps	Number of filter taps	integer	> 2
dw	Width of input/output data samples	integer	≥ 2
cw	Width of coefficients	integer	≥ 2
fw	Number of coefficient fraction bits	integer	≥ 0 (fw < cw)
coeff_A to coeff_H [num_taps-1:0]	Filter coefficients (one coefficient set per filter channel)	integer array x N	Any integer in range $\pm 2^{(cw-1)}$
USE_ROUNDING	Use symmetric arithmetic rounding (not truncate)	Boolean	TRUE/FALSE
USE_SATURATE	Saturate outputs (not wrap)	Boolean	TRUE/FALSE

¹ Xilinx Virtex 6 FPGA used as a benchmark

Block Diagram

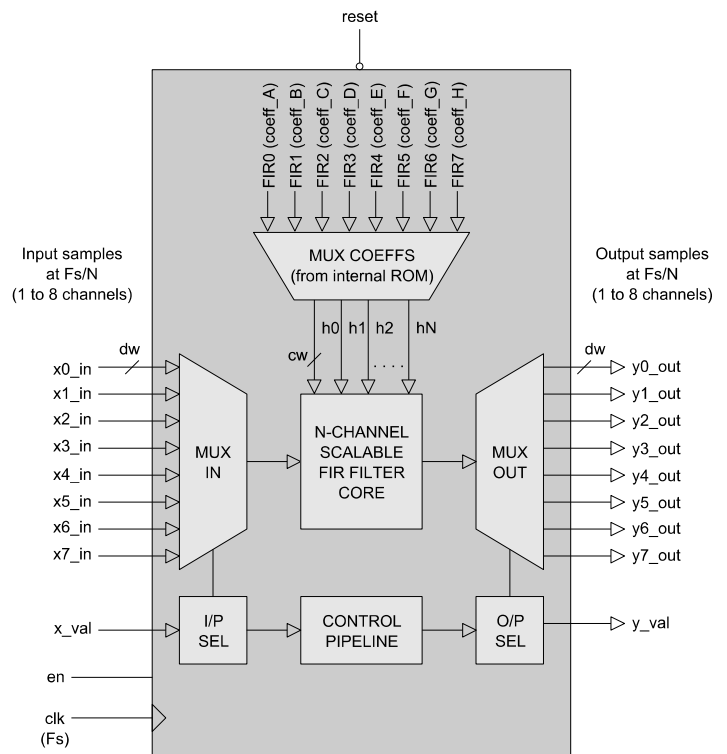


Figure 1: N-Channel FIR filter architecture

Pin-out Description

Pin name	I/O	Description	Active state
clk	in	System clock (F_s)	rising edge
reset	in	System reset	low
en	in	Clock enable	high
x_val	in	Filter inputs valid (coincident with first valid input sample at x0_in)	high
xN_in [dw - 1:0]	in	Filter input samples (signed number)	data
y_val	out	Filter outputs valid (coincident with first valid output sample at y0_out)	high
yN_out [dw - 1:0]	out	Filter output samples (signed number)	data

General Description

FIR_NTAP_MUX is an N-channel multiplexed FIR filter designed for high sample rate applications where hardware resources are limited. The main filter core is organized as a scalable systolic array permitting the user to specify large order filters without compromising maximum attainable clock-speed.

Essentially the filter functions as if it were 'N' separate FIR filters. Each input sample is multiplexed into the filter at a sample rate equal to F_s/N , where F_s is the sampling frequency of the main filter core. Likewise, output samples are updated at a frequency of F_s/N .

The first sample into the filter is aligned by asserting the signal x_val high. The signal y_val is asserted with the first valid output sample. Data samples are advanced in the pipeline on the rising clock-edge of clk when en is active high. When en is low then all data samples are stalled. The clock-enable signal may be used to temporarily disable the filter - or possibly to modify the effective sampling frequency of the system clock. If the clock-enable is not needed it is recommended that this signal be tied high as it will improve overall circuit performance.

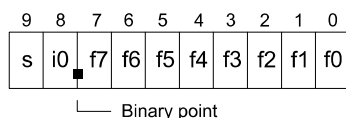
Mathematically, the filter implements the difference equation:

$$y[n] = h_0 x[n] + h_1 x[n-1] + \dots + h_N x[n-N]$$

In the above equation, the input signal is $x[n]$, the output signal is $y[n]$ and h_0 to h_N represent the filter coefficients. The number N is the filter order, the number of filter taps being equal to $N+1$.

Filter coefficients and I/O specification

Filter coefficients² are defined as signed fixed-point numbers in [cw fw] format where cw is the total number of coefficient bits and fw is the number of bits in the fractional part. In all cases, cw must be at least 2 bits and fw must be less than cw to accommodate the sign bit. For instance, a coefficient in [10 8] format would be arranged as follows:



The number of bits in the input and output samples is controlled by the parameter dw . Inputs and outputs are signed values (their format is purely relative). Unused inputs should be tied to zero. For instance, if a filter design only requires four channels, then inputs $x4_in$ to $x7_in$ should be tied low.

Filter implementation options

Output samples may be truncated to dw bits or rounded depending on the implementation option *USE_ROUNDING*. If the rounding option is selected, then symmetric arithmetic rounding is used. This means that the fraction 0.1000... is added to positive numbers and 0.0111... is added to negative numbers. Note that filters implemented with the rounding option will help to reduce the small amplitude offset introduced at DC (0 Hz baseband frequency) attributable to rounding error.

In addition, the option *USE_SATURATE* determines what will happen if the output samples are too large. If the saturate option is enabled, then in the event of an overflow, the output samples will saturate to the largest positive or negative number permitted by dw . With the saturate option disabled, the output samples will simply wrap around. Note that depending on the format of the coefficients and the data width relative to the magnitude of the input samples, the filter outputs may not overflow. In this case, the user may not require the saturation logic.

² The design is supplied with Matlab® scripts for the easy generation of coefficient sets using FDAtool®. Please see application note: app_note_zc002.pdf for more details.

Filter latency

The latency of the filter defined here is the latency in system clock-cycles from the point in which the first input sample is valid, to the point in which the first output sample is valid. The total latency is defined by the following formula:

$$Lat_{TOT} = (N * Taps) + (N * 2) + Lat_{RND} + Lat_{SAT} + 2$$

N = Number of channels

$Taps$ = Number of filter taps

$Lat_{RND} = 2$ if rounding enabled, 0 otherwise

$Lat_{SAT} = 1$ if saturate enabled, 0 otherwise

As an example, consider a 4-channel, 50 tap filter with rounding and saturation enabled. The total latency would be calculated as: $(4*50) + (4*2) + 2 + 1 + 2 = 213$ clock cycles.

Sampling frequency considerations

The system clock frequency is the sampling frequency of the internal filter core. Let this be denoted as F_s . It follows that the sampling frequency of the input and output samples is dependent on the number of multiplexed channels, N . In particular the following formula must be observed for correct filter operation:

$$F_s(\text{one channel}) = \frac{F_s}{N}$$

Functional Timing

Figure 2 shows a sequence of input samples for an 8-channel filter. Note that the signal x_val is used to align the first data sample at the filter input. From that point onwards, the remaining inputs are sampled sequentially in turn. If the user wishes to re-align the filter inputs, then a system reset must be performed before x_val is reasserted with the new first sample.

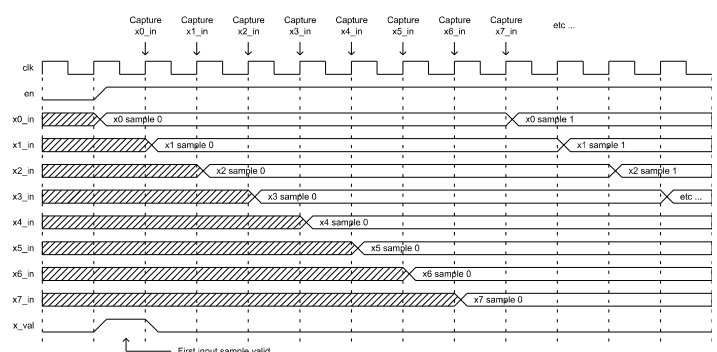


Figure 2: Input timing - all 8 channels active

The output samples follow a similar pattern. Figure 3 shows the corresponding outputs for an 8-channel filter. From the point at which y_val is asserted, the downstream circuit must sample the filter outputs on consecutive clock cycles.

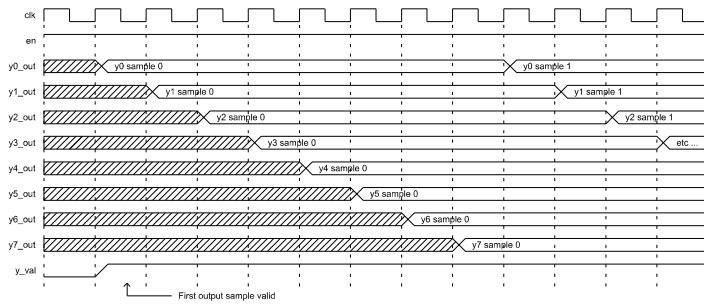


Figure 3: Output timing - all 8 channels active

Source File Description

All source files are provided as text files coded in VHDL. The following table gives a brief description of each file. Note that all generic parameters (including coefficients) are defined in the package called 'fir_ntap_mux_pack.vhd'. Coefficient sets for the 8 possible filter channels are labelled coeff_A, coeff_B, coeff_C, etc ... in the package.

Source file	Description
fir_ntap_mux_pack.vhd	Package containing all generic parameters - including coefficients
fir_ntap_mux_in.vhd	Input sample multiplexer
fir_ntap_mux_out.vhd	Output sample de-multiplexer
fir_ntap_mux_val_pipe.vhd	Control / valid pipeline
fir_ntap_mux_mad.vhd	Multiply-add block
fir_ntap_mux_reg.vhd	Register delay element
fir_ntap_mux_rnd.vhd	Rounding block
fir_ntap_mux_sat.vhd	Saturation block
fir_ntap_mux.vhd	Top-level component
fir_ntap_mux_bench.vhd	Top-level test bench

Functional Testing

An example VHDL testbench is provided for use in a suitable VHDL simulator. The compilation order of the source code is as follows:

1. fir_ntap_mux_pack.vhd
2. fir_ntap_mux_in.vhd
3. fir_ntap_mux_out.vhd
4. fir_ntap_mux_val_pipe.vhd
5. fir_ntap_mux_mad.vhd
6. fir_ntap_mux_reg.vhd
7. fir_ntap_mux_rnd.vhd
8. fir_ntap_mux_sat.vhd
9. fir_ntap_mux.vhd
10. fir_ntap_mux_bench.vhd

The VHDL testbench instantiates the FIR filter component and the user may modify the generic parameters in the file 'fir_ntap_mux_pack.vhd' as required.

The test provided is configured for an eight-channel 31-tap FIR design with each channel having a different low-pass filter characteristic. A sampling frequency of 480MHz has been chosen for the test meaning that each FIR channel has a sample rate of 60MHz.

The magnitude response of the first and last filter are shown in figures 4 and 5 respectively.

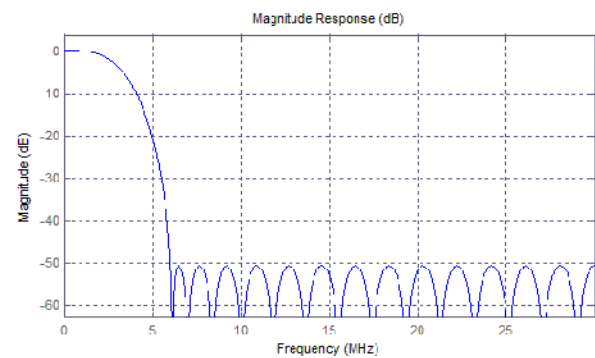


Figure 4: Low-pass filter response for channel 0

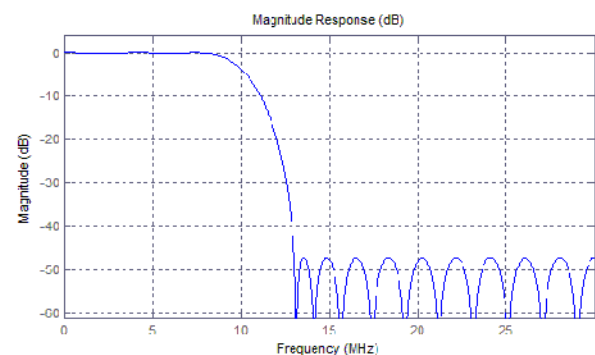


Figure 5: Low-pass filter response for channel 7

The other 6 filters have different low-pass responses with intermediate cut-off frequencies between that of FIR channel 0 and FIR channel 7.

(Note that the filter responses have been arbitrarily chosen for demonstration purposes only. In practice, the user may choose any FIR filter characteristic to suit their requirements).

The simulation must be run for at least 1 ms during which time the impulse response and step response of each multiplexed filter is tested.

The simulation generates a series of 8 text files called 'fir0_out.txt', 'fir1_out.txt', 'fir2_out.txt', etc ... These files contain the output samples for all 8 filter channels captured during the course of the test.

Figures 6 and 7 respectively demonstrate the impulse response and step response outputs for the given test example.

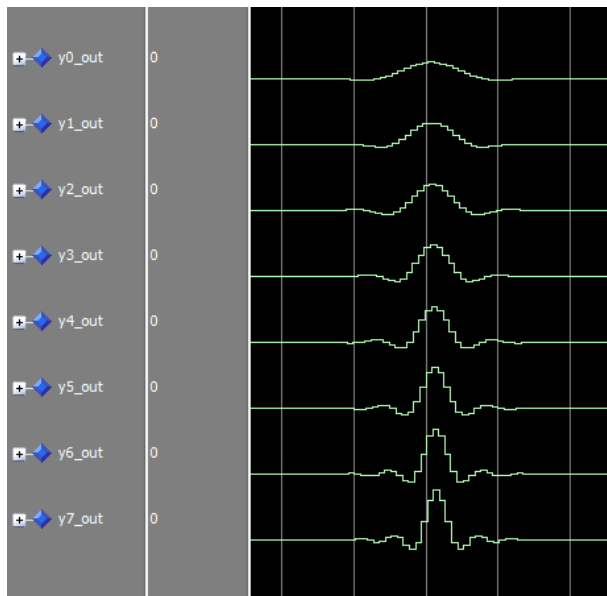


Figure 6: Impulse responses for all 8 independent channels

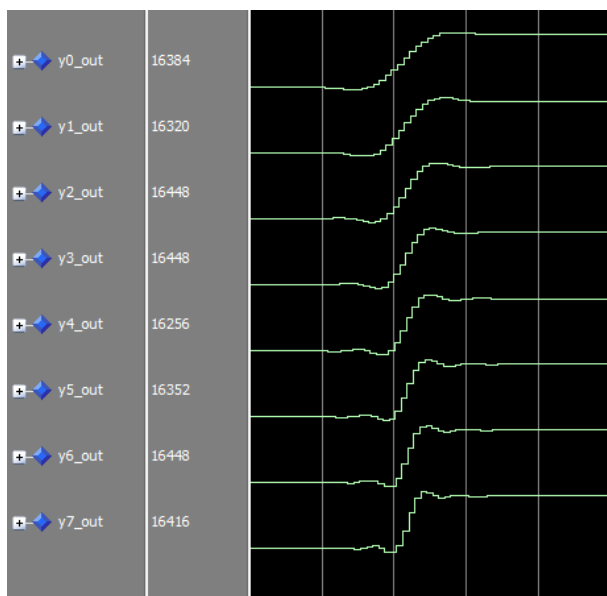


Figure 7: Step response for all 8 independent channels

Synthesis

The files required for synthesis and the design hierarchy is shown below:

- fir_ntap_mux_pack.vhd
- fir_ntap_mux.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_in.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_val_pipe.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_mad.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_reg.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_rnd.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_sat.vhd
 - fir_ntap_mux_out.vhd

The VHDL core is designed to be technology independent. However, as a benchmark, synthesis results have been provided for the Xilinx® Virtex 6 and Spartan 6 FPGA devices. Synthesis results for other FPGAs and technologies can be provided on request.

Smaller and faster designs will be achieved by setting the parameters USE_ROUNDING and USE_SATURATION to FALSE. In addition, choosing filters with similar sets of coefficients should result in small optimizations during synthesis.

Also, fixing the clock-enable signal to logic '1' will generally result in a faster and more compact filter implementation. Unused data inputs should be tied to logic '0'.

Trial synthesis results are shown with the generic parameters set to: num_channels = 8, num_taps = 31, dw = 16, cw = 10, fw = 9, USE_ROUNDING = FALSE, USE_SATURATION = FALSE.

Resource usage is specified after Place and Route.

VIRTEX 6

Resource type	Quantity used
Slice register	1863
Slice LUT	1099
Block RAM	0
DSP48	31
Occupied Slices	314
Clock frequency (approx)	590 MHz

SPARTAN 6

Resource type	Quantity used
Slice register	1867
Slice LUT	1094
Block RAM	0
DSP48	31
Occupied Slices	345
Clock frequency (approx)	250 MHz

Revision History

Revision	Change description	Date
1.0	Initial revision	08/02/2011
1.1	Added filter output plots	23/03/2011
1.2	Design now supports different coefficient sets per channel. Updated synthesis results for Xilinx® 6 series FPGAs	21/01/2013

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