

Woodlands and water quality targets

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Clean water has become a very important concern in Ireland today. We have an obligation to meet our water quality objectives as set out in the River Basin Management Plan for Ireland 2023-2027. We also need to protect our drinking water sources

DAFM Forestry Division has introduced two new grant aided options under the Forestry Programme 2023-2027 to create native forests to deliver specific services regarding the protection of water and aquatic ecosystems.

These exciting options are available through Forest Type 2 (FT2); Forest for Water; and the Native Tree Area Scheme (NTA2).

This approach can provide numerous other benefits including: increased biodiversity, habitat creation and carbon capture. It will also facilitate the expansion and reinforcement of Annex 1 Alluvial Woodland Habitats.

Alluvial woodland is defined as woodland that is subject to periodic flooding by a stream, river or lake.

This is Ireland's rarest native woodland type.

FT2 Forests for Water

FT2 – Forests for Water is planting native trees species suitable to the site for the protection of a water body or an aquatic ecosystems or to reinforce and expand areas of alluvial forests.

DAFM's Forestry Division will cover 100% of the costs to establish the forest through a grant of €6,744/ha, as well as a generous fencing grant. Additional support such as the Woodland Environmental Fund is available wherein the landowner partners with a business and receives a once off single payment of €1,000/ha on top of the grants received.

There is an additional payment of €1,000/ha paid to the landowner from DAFM on completion of the planting.

If the landowner is a farmer, he/she will receive a premium payment of €1,142 for 20 years. A non-farmer will receive the same premium payment of €1,142 for 15 years.

All payments and earnings are income tax free. Planting does not affect entitlements under CAP and a farmer can continue to claim the BISS scheme on their forested land, subject to the terms and conditions of the BISS scheme.

To be eligible, applicants must acquire an afforestation licence and meet one of the following targeted objectives:

- Plant in areas identified as Rank 1-3 on the EPA Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps for phosphorus to break the pathway and protect the delivery point to the receiving aquatic zone;
- Plant in areas identified by the Local Authorities Waters Programme (LAWPRO) or Agricultural Sustainability Support and Advice Programme (ASSAP), for Native Forest creation as a mitigation;
- Plant in areas identified by Irish Water or the National Federation of Group Water Schemes for drinking

water source protection;

- Plant in areas suitable for Natural Water Retention Measures. Such areas are in the process of being identified by the Office of Public Works (OPW);
- Plant in areas identified by Inland Fisheries Ireland for improvement of fisheries habitat and stream ecology;
- Plant to facilitate the expansion of the Habitats Directive Annex I Habitat: Alluvial Woodland.

Native Tree Area (NTA) Scheme

This scheme supports the creation of small native forests on farmed land. It is open to both farmers and non-farmers. This scheme does not require an afforestation licence but is subject to the terms and conditions of the NTA scheme.

Direct entry to the scheme will apply, using the same approach that is employed with Agri-Environmental Schemes. All forests established under this scheme are protected by the



Some of the three hectares of new native woodland and undisturbed water setbacks along the Funshion River at Teagasc Moorepark, Fermoy, Co Cork.



Forestry Act 2014, which controls the felling of trees. Under this Act, it is illegal to cut down any tree unless a Felling licence has been obtained.

Two scenarios can be considered:

- **NTA 1** – Creation of small native forests supports the establishment of

new native forests on farmed land.

- **NTA 2** – Creation of small native forests for water protection supports the establishment of new native forests alongside streams, rivers and lakes protecting and enhancing water quality and aquatic habitats.

It is hoped that through the creation of such corridors, existing native forests can be reconnected thereby addressing the negative effects of fragmentation.

Premiums

Like the Forest for Water option, DAFM, Forestry Division, will cover 100% of the costs to establish the native tree area through a grant of €6,744/ha excluding a generous fencing grant and a deer tree shelter grant if needed. Deer fencing is not supported.

Under NTA2 an annual premium of €2,284 is payable for 10 years. The tree planting area must be between 0.1 and 1.0 hectare. Maximum width is 20 metres, measured tree-to-tree (or 25 metres when open spaces are included).

NTA 1 and NTA 2 can be combined, where appropriate, up to the maximum limit of 2.3 ha per farm holding.

Moorepark event will highlight water-related ecosystem services

A Woodland for Water national event will take place in Teagasc's Moorepark Research Centre, Fermoy on Wednesday, May 29.

This event will highlight the wide range of significant water-related ecosystem services provided by the establishment in 2023 of almost three hectares of new native woodland and undisturbed water setbacks along the Funshion River.

Moorepark Farm benefits from the trees through the reduction in

sediment mobilisation and runoff, the interception of nutrient runoff, as well as increased native woodland biodiversity, carbon sequestration, improved landscape and greater habitat linkage within the wider Moorepark landscape.

The event is open to all advisors, both Teagasc and private consultants, to local discussion groups and farmers. Booking is through Clear Bookings/ Event Brite.

There will be a number of stakeholder stands on the day giving short 10-15 minute presentations including Teagasc Moorepark, the Forestry Development Department, ASSAP/LAWPRO, the Signpost Programme, and the new Water EIP, etc.