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Procedure for Managing Natural Regeneration in Environmental Setbacks		

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1. Scope

This document describes a procedure for identifying, recording, controlling, and monitoring natural regeneration of conifers in environmental setbacks on the Coillte estate. For the purpose of this procedure document, natural regeneration refers to non-native conifer species that has naturally established within the environmental setbacks (i.e. water, open & unplanted habitat and archaeology setbacks only).

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to specify a standard procedure for managing natural regeneration in environmental setbacks.

3. Types of Natural Regeneration

The natural regeneration can be broadly divided into three categories:

3.1 Early Intervention Natural Regeneration:

Regeneration that can be dealt with through standard forest establishment interventions through grass cleaning/brush cutting. Typically carried out within the first 4 years of site maintenance. This will form part of the free growing sign off, i.e. a site can only be considered free growing if site is fully stocked, plants are free from competing vegetation and all environmental setbacks are free of naturally regenerated conifer species.

3.2 Post- Establishment Natural Regen:

Natural Regen that has developed and is present post-establishment tending. That is to say that the adjacent restocked site has passed free growing sign off and no further establishment interventions are planned. This regeneration is of significant size that requires brush cutter/chainsaw clearance with no recoverable timber products. This will be identified in recently developed 8 year tending surveys, which started in Q2 2023, and will be undertaken by the BAU Establishment teams.

3.3 Pre-harvest Natural Regeneration:

Long established natural regeneration which has developed to a point at which requires chainsaw/harvest processor clearance. Typically, this regeneration is closer in age class to adjacent forest which is planned for thinning/clearfell interventions. This may comprise of stems with recoverable timber products. This will be removed during the next scheduled harvest operations.

Natural Regen which has encroached onto adjacent land will only be removed in agreement with the adjacent landowner and DAFM.

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4. Responsibilities

4.1 Establishment:

- Natural regeneration, which is present in Silvicultural Units (Sus), including environmental setbacks, that have not yet reached free-growing sign off are to be managed by the establishment team through manual cleaning, i.e. using a brush cutter, chainsaw or by hand, rather than the application of a herbicide.

4.2 Harvesting:

- Ensure that all setbacks are completely felled within licenced area during clearfells.
- Consider if a setback can be created at thinning stage without de-stablishing the forest stand.
- Manual felling using a chainsaw operator and/or ring barking may be required in hard to access environmental setbacks.

4.3 Resource:

- To ensure that licence area extends to the environmental setback feature.
- When creating HBs, it is important that mature / longer established regeneration is captured in the environmental setback.
- To facilitate the application of a felling licence for mature natural regeneration (>10 years), in setbacks, where required

4.4 Estates

- Responsible for managing natural regeneration that's outside of establishment and harvesting interventions detected in the environmental setbacks.
- Working with both establishment and harvesting processes in determining the optimum intervention to control the detected regeneration.

5. Procedure

5.1 Establishment:

- The presence of natural regeneration will be recorded at 2 and 4 year quality survey checks in mobile builder and LRM – noting that natural regeneration in environmental setbacks has been added as a sign off check in on the Mobile Builder Form and LRM Query Builder.
- Remedial action, including payment for these works, will be need to be agreed with the establishment contractor locally.
- At 8 year tending site review, the Establishment Forest Manager will record the presence of natural regeneration and then assign a tending activity and planned year. Upon completion of these surveys, the forest works manager will package these works together and procure a contractor.

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5.1 Estates Team:

- Control of natural regeneration in identified environmental setbacks as identified by the estates team, other forest operational processes and stakeholders.
- Control of natural regeneration in adjacent lands in conjunction with the landowner, where requested and legally permitted.
- Working with the ecology team to identify regeneration in biodiversity areas and developing a plan for the management of same.

6.0 Monitoring

- Year 2, Year 4 (free-growing) and Year 8 (tending) Quality Surveys after planting will be assessed and recorded on LRM.
- The activity risk and planned year for identified remedial measures will be recorded by silvicultural unit(s) and will be used for annual planning, budgeting and recording of works completed.

7.0 Revision History

Revision No.	Revision Date	Change details	Reason for change
1	14/08/2023	Drafting of procedure	Standardise the procedure for the management of natural regeneration.