

Forestry Sectoral Action Work Plan

Forestry Division | Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

May 2025

Contents

1.	Context	3
2.	Background	4
3.	Sectoral Action Work Plan Introduction.....	6
3.1.	Reference to the WAP – actions assigned to sector.....	6
3.2.	The numbers of WB where sector is significant pressure	7
	High Status Objective waterbodies	7
	All Waterbodies.....	8
	Waterbodies with Sole Significant Pressure.....	8
3.3.	The main issues arising.....	8
4.	Role and responsibility of the organisation	10
5.	Main policies and programmes in place to address issues	12
6.	Data Sharing arrangements.....	15
7.	By Organisation	16
7.1.	Work Plan Objectives.....	16
7.2.	Distance to Target	16
7.3.	Work Plan Actions.....	16
8.	Information Flow.....	33
9.	Reporting Mechanisms for Implementation	33
10.	Implementation Oversight	33
11.	Stakeholder Submissions	34

1. Context

The Sectoral Action Work Plans (SAWP) are national scale plans, which provide for the tracking of the actions assigned to the sectors in the Water Action Plan 2024 (WAP). The objective of the SAWP is to ensure that the sector over time will no longer be a significant pressure on water status and will include information on how the sector will address all waterbodies at risk from that pressure, in line with the WFD objectives.

However, in the case of the Drinking Water Source Protection Sectoral Action Work Plan, the intention is to track progress in the development of Drinking Water Safety plans (DWSP) required under the Drinking Water Regulations.

The SAWPs will be iterative in nature and will outline at a minimum the actions assigned to the implementing body under the Water Action Plan 2024.

The Catchment Management Work Plans (CMWP) will support the Sectoral Action Work Plans. The CMWP are, as their name suggests, at catchment scale and will focus on the actions taken in individual water bodies. The SAWP will provide the list of actions proposed nationally while the CMWP will indicate where those actions are planned by all sectors in individual waterbodies. The CMWP will also identify the co-benefits of water focused measures.

Both plans will be made publicly available. It is anticipated that the SAWPs will be hosted by the DHLGH Water Advisory Unit Programme Delivery Office (PDO). Further discussions on the preparation of the CMWP are ongoing and will determine where the 5 pilot catchment work plans will be hosted.

Each organisation will track the implementation of the actions set out in the SAWP and the CMWP tracked at site scale, where possible, but reported at water body, catchment, and national scale. This will be the first time that the implementation of all WAP actions will be tracked at this spatial scale so changes may be required to existing data management systems or new ones developed.

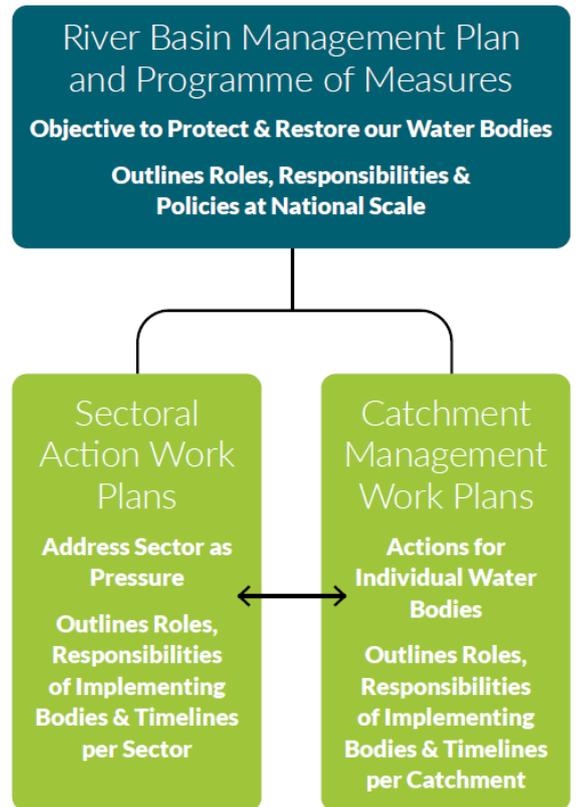


Figure 1 : The relationship between the national Water Action Plan, the Sectoral Action Work Plans and the Catchment Management Work Plans (WAP, 2024)

2. Background

LAWPRO have been assisting with the coordination of the approach to the preparation of the Sectoral Action Plans. Table 1 identifies the sectors that must develop a Sectoral Action Work Plan as set out in the Water Action Plan (WAP) 2024.

Action 1.3: Sectoral Action Work Plans will be developed. They will set out the actions to be taken by the relevant authorities in line with their legally binding general duties under Article 3(1) of the 2003 Water Policy Regulations (SI 722 of 2003).

Table 1: List of Sectoral Action Work Plans from Table 14 pg. 79 of Water Action Plan

Sector	Lead authority	Publication Date
Agriculture	DAFM, Teagasc	Q1 2025
Hydromorphology	DHLGH, IFI, OPW, DAFM	Q1 2025
Forestry	DAFM - Forest Service	Q1 2025
Urban Wastewater	Uisce Éireann	Q1 2025
Peat	NPWS, Bord na Móna, Local Authorities	Q1 2025
Drinking Water Source Protection	NFGWS, Uisce Éireann, Local Authorities	Q1 2025
Invasive Alien Species	NPWS, Local Authorities	Q1 2025

To facilitate this work, this document sets out the key elements (minimum) or template for the preparation of the Sectoral Action Work Plans.

The following are the key objectives identified in the WAP and apply the sector as a whole; each pressure owner will need to include these in their individual organisation Work Plan objectives set out in Section 7.1.

- Restore: The objective of all the Sectoral Action Work Plans will be to ensure the sector will no longer be a significant pressure on water status and will include information on how the sector will address all water bodies *at risk* from that pressure with a plan to develop evidence-based targeted restoration measures.
- Protect: These plans will also identify protection measures to ensure that no additional water bodies are put at risk from that sector.

Based on 2024 data, 11.6% of the total land area of Ireland (or 808,848 ha) is under forest cover. This is one of the lowest in the EU, where the average is 38.3%. Despite this, forest cover in Ireland is at its highest in over 350 years. Just over 49% is under public ownership, mainly Coillte. The remainder is on private land. The forest estate comprises 69.4% conifers and 30.6% broadleaves. Sitka spruce remains the predominant species used in Irish forestry, due to highly favourable growth rates and suitability for roundwood processing. Ireland's forests are still relatively pest and disease-free due mainly to our island status, but climate change and increased international trade pose increased risk. Diseases such as Phytophthora ramorum (mainly affecting larch) and Ash Dieback (Hymenoscyphus fraxineus) may influence species diversity into the future, alongside climate change.

The average size of private grant-aided afforestation between 1980 and 2023 was 8.5 ha. Most (i.e. 82%) of the area afforested since 1980 was undertaken by farmers.

Since 1944, an average of 126 km of forest roads have been built annually in public forests.



Due to the long-term nature of forestry as a land use, a large part of the current resource reflects policies in place decades ago. For example, afforestation by the State for much of the 20th century focused on upland, bogland

and other areas deemed marginal for agriculture. Ownership transferred to Coillte on its formation in 1989-90, accounting for the large areas of conifer forests on these site types now under Coillte management. The earlier years of private planting, commencing with the Western Aid Package in 1981, also targeted these same site types.

Many of the resulting forests are highly productive from a timber perspective, supporting downstream industries such as sawmilling and MDF production, which themselves produce high quality, carbon-friendly and sustainable material for construction in Ireland and abroad. However, harvesting such areas can prove challenging, due to their presence within landscapes and on soils that are often sensitive in relation to (inter alia) water and aquatic habitats and species. However, the reforestation stage provides an unique opportunity to design forests that respond to these and other sensitivities, with the introduction of (e.g.) large water setbacks, drain blocking and species diversification.

In recent decades, due to environmental concerns and other issues, private planting has moved 'down the slope' and onto more fertile land, enabling greater species diversity and the application of different approaches to management, such as continuous cover forestry and agro-forestry. In this context and in relation to water, forests – including new, existing and restructured – can be used strategically as mitigation, to protect receiving waters from nutrients and sediments and other negative impacts generated by other land uses.

This double-stranded approach is reflected in the Forestry Sectoral Action Plan, i.e. to reduce the negative impacts on water arising from legacy forests (i.e. 'Restore') and to encourage the use of forests to protect and enhance water quality and associated ecosystems (i.e. 'Protect').

3. Sectoral Action Work Plan Introduction

The actions set out for the Forestry Sector reflect the dual approach described above, i.e. to restore and to protect, in terms of how existing forests in sensitive locations are managed, and how new, existing and restructured forests can be created and managed to protect water quality and associated ecosystems.

The actions themselves are supported by:

- i. the robust assessment process applied by the Department of Agriculture, Food & the Marine (referred to as ‘DAFM-Forestry’¹) to all applications for forestry licences in relation to afforestation, forest roading and tree felling, with or without grant aid (as described under Section 4); and
- ii. the current Forestry Programme and the range of supports therein, facilitating change.

Throughout all of the actions, in addition to restoring and protecting water quality, clear co-benefits arise in terms of biodiversity (both onsite and within the surrounding countryside), soil stability, carbon sequestration, landscape enhancement, economic activity (based on wood and non-wood products and services), heritage and culture, and the creation of opportunities for outdoor recreation and interpretation, and associated health benefits.

3.1. Reference to the WAP – actions assigned to sector

Actions extracted from appendix 2 of the WAP are listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Principal actions relevant to the sector from the Water Action Plan Appendix 2.

Action	Action Title
Forestry 1	In support of the Catchment Management Work Plans, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will publish a Sectoral Action Work Plan. DAFM will update the 2018 document “Forests and Water: Achieving Objectives under Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021” as the Forestry Sectoral Action Work Plan supporting the third RBMP.
Forestry 2	DAFM recognises the key recommendation from the HYDROFOR Project (2016) to “cease afforestation on peat soils in acid-sensitive headwater catchments”, and is applying various water and non-water related policies, procedures and protocols that combine to rule out afforestation on such sites, or to limit it to appropriate multi-benefit native woodland.
Forestry 3	DAFM to increase the area of forests with appropriate water setbacks through the ongoing restructuring of existing forest stands at clearfell / reforestation stage.
Forestry 4	DAFM to ensure the application of water setbacks and other water-based protection during the creation of new forests, principally realised with support under the 2023 – 2027 Afforestation Scheme.
Forestry 5	DAFM to manage the application of support measures that have a clear role in relation to the protection of water, including: the Continuous Cover Forestry Scheme; the various native woodland and agro-forestry options under the Afforestation Scheme, the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme, and the Reforestation for Climate Resilience Scheme.
Forestry 6	DAFM to encourage the uptake of Forest Type 3 under the Afforestation Scheme, aimed at funding native woodland creation on public land, specifically to deliver woodland-based solutions for the protection of drinking water sources and water in general.

¹ Forestry in the Department is spread over three separate but interlocking Divisions: Forestry Policy & Development, the Forestry Division, and the Forestry Inspectorate. Funding for forest research is also overseen by a separate Division dealing with research across the entire remit of the Department. ‘DAFM-Forestry’ is used through this chapter as a collective term.

Action	Action Title
Forestry 7	DAFM to launch the new Forests for Water option (Forest Type 2) under the Afforestation Scheme, which offers added incentives to farmers and other landowners to promote the creation of new native forests specifically to provide water services, including improvements to water quality, drinking water source protection, natural water retention, the improvement of aquatic and riparian habitats, and the expansion of alluvial woodland.
Forestry 8	DAFM to continue to address all forestry-related water incidents, as identified by DAFM Inspectors and LAWPRO or reported to DAFM Forestry by foresters, water agencies, environmental NGOs and members of the public.
Forestry 9	DAFM to train Registered Foresters, Consultant Ecologists and machine operators, in relation to the design, and implementation of forestry projects, from the perspective of protecting and enhancing receiving waterways.
Forestry 10	Continue to seek improvements to the licence applications process for key forestry activities.

3.2. The numbers of WB where sector is significant pressure

The EPA carries out a characterisation process which is used to identify significant pressures on a rolling-basis. The characterisation assessment period used in this Sectoral Action Work Plan is 2016-2021, consistent with the Water Action Plan 2024. The dynamic nature of the characterisation process may explain differences in the numbers of waterbodies impacted by this sector in this Sectoral Action Work Plan compared to live data.

Tables below include counts of waterbodies significantly impacted by pressures that may be influenced by actions undertaken by the sector (Table 3, 4 and 5). The list of pressures is not exhaustive, there may be other pressures potentially influenced by the sector. The sector should assess if there are other pressures that their actions might influence. The EPA report on [pressures impacting on water quality](#) is a useful resource that links out to key information including the pressure narratives and catchment assessments. The [Catchment Assessment Master Spreadsheet](#) has data for every waterbody including significant pressures and issues with links to waterbody data downloads.

High Status Objective waterbodies

High Status Objective or Blue Dot waterbodies are a priority for the Water Action Plan. These are waterbodies that must achieve the highest level of water quality, High Status. There are 402 Blue Dot waterbodies in Ireland.

Table 3: Number of Blue Dot waterbodies with a significant pressure group related to the forestry sector. Note that waterbodies can have more than one pressure.

Pressure Group	River	Lake	Transitional	Coastal	Total
Forestry operations ²	46	0	0	0	46

² Forestry operations include activities such as clearfelling, thinning, forest road construction and replanting.

All Waterbodies

Table 4: Numbers of waterbodies with a significant pressure group related to the forestry sector. Note that waterbodies can have more than one pressure.

Pressure Group	River	Lake	Transitional	Coastal	Groundwater	Total
Forestry operations	192	14	0	0	10	216

Waterbodies with Sole Significant Pressure

Table 5: Number of waterbodies where the forestry sector is the Sole pressure

Pressure Group	River	Lake	Transitional	Coastal	Groundwater	Total
Forestry operations	41	6	0	0	1	48

3.3. The main issues arising

The most common water quality problems arising from forestry and associated activities related to the release of sediment and nutrients to the aquatic environment, hydromorphological impacts (physical alteration to aquatic habitats) and acidification. Water quality data show that the impacts occur during major forestry operations such as clearfell, thinning, forest road construction and replanting. During the intermittent periods, however, when the forests are stable, water quality can recover and can be maintained. Stable, well designed forests, with appropriate setback distances from watercourses, can therefore also be a measure to protect water quality.

Sediment losses

Fine sediment (such as sand, silt, clay and organic soils) fills the spaces between coarser material in the stream bed and can interfere with aquatic ecosystem functions, particularly in the more sensitive high-status waters. Juvenile individuals of the critically endangered Freshwater Pearl Mussel for example, are particularly sensitive to fine sediment. Sediment is also often the transport mechanism for chemicals and nutrients that are attached to the sediment particles. Typical sources of fine sediment from forestry activities include thinning and clear-felling, replanting, road construction and drainage.

Nutrient losses

Nutrient losses give rise to eutrophication (excessive growth of plants and algae) in our waterbodies. The key nutrients causing impact from forestry are phosphorus and ammonium. Nutrient sources are often associated with specific forestry operations and can be intermittent and temporary. They may therefore be challenging to capture in water chemistry grab samples and may be better reflected in the biological sampling which provides a more integrated overview of water quality over the longer term.

Phosphorus losses from forestry can arise from the decomposition of brash after felling, fertilisation application during forest establishment (if applied) or inappropriately managed aerial fertilisation (if applicable). Ammonium losses can occur where trees have been planted in peatland soils. Drainage works and tree roots can lower the water table which allows the organic matter to break down, causing the release of ammonium. Many peat sites no longer qualify for afforestation, although reforestation remains a possibility.

The EPA has modelled nutrient loads entering waterbodies from various sectors, including forestry. For nitrogen, the contribution from forestry is relatively small at 3%. For phosphorous, the proportion of the load is slightly higher (10%). This reflects that the dominant water quality impacts are mainly related to impacts due to

excess fine sediment and changes to the hydromorphological condition, which impact approximately two thirds of 'At risk' waterbodies where forestry is identified as a significant pressure.

Impacts to hydromorphological condition

Land drainage and channel maintenance as part of forestry operations can cause physical alteration to the bed and banks of watercourses, including widening, deepening and straightening, which lead to modification of stream flow and levels, and channel forming processes. Destabilisation of banks may also occur with drainage, or where there are inadequate set back distances between plantation trees and watercourses, which can cause the release of additional fine sediment.

Acidification

Acidification impacts occur when the pH of waters drops below levels that can sustain healthy aquatic ecology, for extended periods of time. In upland forested areas, where the underlying geology and soils create an acidic environment, there are a number of different mechanisms by which this can happen, some of which are more important than others in the Irish context, and some of which have changed over time. There are fewer than 20 waterbodies that are impacted by acidification which are located mainly in Wicklow, Connemara and parts of the Northwest.

Historically, acidification of surface waters was one of the major environmental impacts of air pollution. Conifer forests, which are often located on upland exposed areas, were known to capture and concentrate airborne pollutants that were subsequently washed into surface waters. While this is a common mechanism in Europe due to the prevalence of heavy industry, and was an issue in Ireland in the past, reductions in nitrogen and particularly sulphur deposition have resulted in a gradual decline in the degree and extent of surface water acidification in Ireland.

Forestry operations such as drainage, planting and felling can disturb the peat and cause erosion which can increase the amount of humic acids released from the peat when it rains, which in turn lowers the pH. The duration of the disturbance and the length of time that the stream is impacted by a low pH <6 is an important factor in determining the impact on the aquatic ecology. Increased and more intense rainfall with climate change may increase the severity of these impacts in susceptible waterbodies over time.

The growth and removal of trees from sensitive soils can also change the chemistry of the soil and its ability to neutralise the acidity, which in turn lowers the pH of the waters percolating through the landscape into rivers.

4. Role and responsibility of the organisation

The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will be primarily responsible for delivering the Forestry Sector Action Plan.

It is the Government Department responsible for ensuring the development of forestry within Ireland in a sustainable manner and to a scale that maximises its contribution to national socio-economic well-being and in a way that is compatible with the protection of the environment. DAFM-Forestry is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Forestry Act 2014 and supporting legislation (principally S.I.191 of 2017, as amended) The licensing of afforestation, forest roading and tree felling is a central component of that legislation. Other key areas include forest policy and strategic development, forestry grant schemes, felling control, issues concerning climate change and adaptation, forest protection from pests and diseases, forest reproductive material, and the National Forest Inventory (NFI).

The Department also provides funding for public good forest research, with the aim of developing a scientific foundation to support a sustainable, competitive, market orientated and innovative forest sector.

As set out under the European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003 (S.I.722 of 2003), the Minister for Agriculture, Food & the Marine is listed as a relevant ‘public authority’ for the purpose of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). In accordance with 3(1), DAFM-Forestry must “exercise its functions in a manner which is consistent with the provisions of the [Water Framework] Directive and which achieves or promotes compliance with the requirements of the Directive”. Therefore, DAFM-Forestry is responsible for ensuring that any decision it makes is consistent with the protection of water bodies, the restoration of water bodies to ‘good status’, and the prevention of any deterioration.

DAFM-Forestry is described as a ‘public body’ under the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I.477 of 2011) (as amended). It therefore has responsibilities under both the Habitats Directive and the Birds Directive in relation to European Sites and protected habitats and species. Due to the number and distribution of European Sites across Ireland and the high degree of hydrological connectivity created by our waterways, detailed water-related mitigation is typically arrived at during the Appropriate Assessment process.

Water, Felling and Reforestation

Under the Forestry Act 2014 and the Forestry Regulations 2017 (as amended), most forms of tree felling require a Tree Felling Licence (TFL) from DAFM-Forestry (see Felling & Reforestation Policy for details). As stipulated in the Standards for Felling & Reforestation, when applying for a TFL, the Applicant must include a completed Harvest Plan and associated maps, following a detailed template and mapping standards. The application might cover a once-off felling operation or multiple operations, e.g. a series of thinning operations culminating in the clearfelling and reforestation of the site.

On receipt, DAFM undertakes a details assessment in line with its responsibilities under (inter alia) the Forestry Act 2014, the WFD and the Birds and Habitats Directives, as per transposing legislation (as detailed above).

The following provides an overview of the assessment of a TFL application, in order to provide the context against which the Forestry Sectoral Action Plan is being implemented. The process relating to tree felling is selected over the corresponding processes for afforestation and forest roading, in light of: (i) the significant risk to water posed by tree felling on certain sites; and (ii) the key opportunity reforestation offers to restructure so-called ‘legacy forests’.

The following represent the key components of the assessment by DAFM of a TFL application:

- Public consultation via online posting on the public-facing Forest Licence Viewer³, on receipt of the application and later, if information relating to the Appropriate Assessment arises. A Site Notice must also be in place onsite during the tree felling and extraction operations.

³ <https://flv.apps.services.agriculture.gov.ie>

- Referral to statutory consultees, including the relevant County Council, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Inland Fisheries Ireland and National Monuments (the latter if deemed necessary by expert Archaeologists within DAFM-Forestry).
- Silvicultural and environmental assessment of the application by a Forestry Inspector, based on the information submitted, the review of various datasets on the GIS-based iFORIS system, and field inspections (if deemed necessary).
- Ecological assessment of the application by expert Ecologists based within DAFM-Forestry, should any ecological issues arise. This includes AA Screening and Appropriate Assessment (if screened in), as required under Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive. An estimated % of TFL applications undergo Appropriate Assessment, to investigate if there is a likelihood of the project having an adverse effect on the integrity of any European Site, alone or in combination with other plans and projects). The project being assessed can only proceed (from the AA perspective) where this likelihood is ruled out.
- In situations where clearfelling is proposed, a particular focus is applied to reforestation, to ensure that the new forest reflects all environmental sensitivities, including those that may not have been fully considered when the original forest was planted. This is particularly important in relation to ‘legacy forests’, and offers an opportunity to eliminate the negative impacts and to reinforce the positive impacts forests can deliver. The Felling & Reforestation Policy document is particularly important in this regard, in relation to the Reforestation Objectives set out therein, and scenarios described whereby DAFM-Forestry may accept deforestation, due to ‘overriding environmental concerns.’
- Any TFL licence issued will be conditional on adherence to the Standards for Felling & Reforestation and any bespoke conditions arising from (e.g.) Appropriate Assessment. Typically, much of the conditionality will relate to the protection of water, in the context of both the Habitats and Birds Directives and the Water Framework Directive.
- If a TFL is issued, the Forest Licence Viewer is updated and no work can commence within 14 working days. This is to create a window for appeals against the decision of the Minister to be lodged with the independent Forestry Appeals Committee, for consideration. If an appeal is lodged, no works can take place until the appeals process is exhausted.

A TFL application may also relate to a parallel application under one of several support schemes available under the current Forestry Programme, such as the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme, the Continuous Cover Forestry Scheme and the Climate Resilience Reforestation Scheme (see below for details).

The above account of how DAFM-Forestry assesses TFL applications also applies (with necessary modifications) to its assessment of applications for afforestation and forest roading, with or without grant aid. Throughout, the protect of water is key, and continual effort is made to avoid practices that negatively affect water quality, and to promote practices that deliver ecosystem services regarding receiving watercourses.

5. Main policies and programmes in place to address issues

In addition to the Forestry Sector's involvement with, and commitments under, various national processes (e.g. Climate Action Plan, National Biodiversity Action Plan, Nature Restoration Plan (in progress)), the following are policies and programmes specific to this sector and in place to address issues.

Ireland's Forest Strategy 2023-2030

This strategy addresses the urgent need to expand Ireland's national forest estate on both public and private land in a manner that will deliver lasting benefits for climate change, biodiversity, water quality, wood production, economic development, employment and quality of life. This Strategy is aligned with the EU Forest Strategy.

Ireland's Forest Strategy Implementation Plan

This plan sets out the steps and timelines needed to realise Ireland's ambitions to expand its forests and to increase the role that resource plays in helping to address the climate and biodiversity objectives at both National and EU level.

Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027

This Scheme, available under the current Forestry Programme, provides funding to establish new forests, in order to expand the current land area of Ireland under forest cover (currently at 11.6%). Thresholds and mandatory safeguards set out in the Land Types for Afforestation document and the Environmental Requirements for Afforestation play a key role in the design, assessment and approval of afforestation applications, as described further below.

Critically, the Afforestation Scheme contains 12 options (or 'Forest Types'), allowing landowners to afforest land with a wide variety of forests, from native woodland to continuous cover forests to amenity woodlands to agroforestry. FT3 is of particular relevance to water, as it funds the creation of new native woodland in areas where this land use change can help address site-specific sensitivities regarding water.

The most commercially-orientated forestry type supported is FT12, involving a commercial conifer (typically Sitka spruce) planted with 20% broadleaves, and up to 15% left as open space comprising water setbacks, other types of environmental setbacks and open areas, and areas left unplanted for future management purposes (e.g. future forest roads).

Successful applicants under the Afforestation Scheme receive two grant instalments designed to cover the cost of planting and early maintenance to year 4, plus 15 or 20 annual premiums in recognition for the ecosystem services provided by the new forest. Applicants under FT3 also receive an additional payment, in recognition of the specific role the forests involved play regarding water.

The separate Native Tree Area Scheme is also available, funding the creation of small (i.e. up to one hectare) native woodlands by farmers in defined areas of the country. The scheme includes two elements, one targeting the creation of small native forests for water protection.

Support Schemes

The current Forestry Programme also provides funding under a number of support schemes, several of which have a particular role regarding water. For example,

- The Native Woodland Conservation Scheme provides for the restoration of existing woodlands, tackling issues such as overgrazing by deer and the spread of invasive species (e.g. sycamore and rhododendron). By restoring the woodland ecosystem, this scheme encourages the emergence of natural vegetation and natural functionality(*) that protect and promote water quality and the aquatic ecosystem. (*e.g. bank stabilisation, the creation of dappled shade and the associated cooling effect, the input of food in the form of invertebrates, leaves, etc.).

- The Continuous Cover Forestry Scheme encourages the mid-rotation conversion of forests originally planted for eventual clearfelling, into forests managed on a continuous cover basis using close-to-native silvicultural systems. By moving from the clearfelling of the whole stand to the periodic harvesting of single or small groups of trees for specific markets, this process avoids the sudden exposure of soil over the entire site, and in relation to water, the heightened risk this brings in relation to sedimentation and eutrophication.
- The Climate Resilient Reforestation Scheme, which funds the replacement of conifer stands at clearfell stage, with CCF woodland, native woodland or a 'BIO & WATER' mix, which prescribes the planting of native trees either at a wide spacing or as groups, and the promotion of natural ground vegetation. In doing so, clearfelling is eliminated as a future operation onsite, and is replaced by a stable semi-natural habitat which will deliver various water-related ecosystem services on an ongoing basis.
- The NeighbourWood Scheme funds the development of amenity woodlands and the installation of appropriate facilities, to encourage the recreational use by local communities and visitors, and in doing so, to promote health and well-being, and increased awareness of the natural world. Such projects can be developed with a particular emphasis on an adjoining watercourse, providing a platform through which local people of all ages can learn more about, and come to treasure, their local waterway.

Land Types for Afforestation: Soil & Fertility

Before submitting a site for an afforestation licence (with or without grant aid), the Applicant and their Registered Forester must first check to see if the site satisfies certain thresholds set out in this document, regarding soil type and fertility.

Soil types deemed eligible for afforestation (based on carbon budgeting) are as follows:

- Mineral soils: Eligible soil type for afforestation under all Forest Types (FTs).
- Organo-mineral soils with a peat (organic layer) depth of 30 cm or less: Eligible soil type for afforestation under all FTs.
- Modified fens and modified cutaway raised bogs: Eligible soil type for afforestation, but only under those Forest Types (FTs) involving native woodland creation and only if capable of supporting the establishment and development of the most relevant native woodland type identified for the site (using the Native Woodland Framework), without further drainage.

Regarding the threshold for fertility, the procedure set out in the document relies on the presence or absence of plant species on site that indicate particular levels of 'Reaction' (R) (as a measure of soil pH) and 'Nitrogen' (N) (as a measure of fertility). To be eligible for afforestation, a site must achieve a R+N score of 6.0 or greater, following the prescribed surveying methodology.

If one or both thresholds are not met, the application should not be submitted to DAFM-Forestry. In relating to submitted projects, the environmental assessment applied by DAFM-Forestry checks to see that both thresholds are met.

The above thresholds have a direct relevance to water quality, as they exclude afforestation as a land use change from certain landscapes and headwaters that are highly sensitive from a water perspective.

Environmental Requirements for Afforestation

All approved afforestation projects must adhere to the design and operational safeguards set out in the *Environmental Requirements for Afforestation* document, many of which relate directly to the protection of water. Key measures include the creation of unplanted setbacks along aquatic zones, relevant watercourses, water-related hotspots and drinking water abstraction points (as defined in the document) and operational restrictions regarding cultivation and drainage, and the use of herbicides and fertiliser. The document should be read alongside Section 9 of the *Forestry Standards Manual*, which details the requirements regarding the selection and installation of drainage and cultivation. Where required for root growth and development, drainage must be carefully planned to minimise water velocity and to prevent sedimentation entering the aquatic zone. In

general, sediment traps must be installed in all newly-created forest drains, and all forest drains must terminate before entering the water setback, which comprises a 10-25 m wide unplanted area alongside the aquatic zone, to be left undisturbed throughout the forest rotation

Felling and Reforestation Policy

This policy document sets out the legal and regulatory framework relating to tree felling. Information on the felling licence application process is also described. Crucially, the document sets out a number of reforestation objectives relating to sites submitted for clearfelling. These Reforestation Objectives are a key tool in addressing legacy forests, clarifying the options that may or may not be acceptable to DAFM-Forestry, depending on the sensitivities regarding (inter alia) water. The reforestation options are as follows:

- Conifer Forest for Wood Production
- Broadleaf Forest for Wood Production
- Mixed Forest for Wood Production
- Reforestation for Continuous Cover Forest
- Reforestation for Biodiversity and Water Protection ('BIO & WATER')
- Alternative, as detailed by the Applicant

Forest removal may also be accepted by DAFM-Forestry, in relation to various scenarios described elsewhere in this document. 'Overriding environmental considerations' is an acceptable scenario for permanent forest removal, in cases where the use of the Reforestation Objectives will not be enough to protect, e.g. a highly sensitive watercourse. In such situations, alternative afforestation is not required, nor is the refunding of any grants and premiums paid in relation to the forest earmarked for removal. DAFM-Forestry often act as a 2nd Authority in such cases, as deforestation requires planning permission (or a Section 5 exemption) from the relevant Local Authority.

Standards for Felling and Reforestation

This document sets out the environmental standards that apply to felling (thinning, clearfelling) and reforestation undertaken under a felling licence issued by DAFM-Forestry. Numerous design and operational measures are set out, including many that relate directly to the protection of water (e.g. machine exclusion zones, safeguards regarding temporary crossing points, the mandatory use of brash mats to protect soil during operation, the installation of unplanted setback along water features at reforestation stage).

Forest Opportunities Map

This DAFM map supports the Afforestation Scheme 2023-2027 by providing high-level national guidance on land suitability for afforestation for various purposes, including timber production, environmental enhancement, climate change mitigation, forest industry development, alternative off-farm income generation, and opportunities for tourism and recreational use. The map illustrates areas with a potential for afforestation and areas where afforestation would be unsuitable for various reasons (including environmental sensitivities such as water).

The Forest Opportunities Map is consistent with, and feeds into, the Land Use Review (Phase 1 and 2), which itself forms part of the Programme for Government. The objective of the Land Use Review is to ensure that optimal land use options inform all relevant Government decisions, and to provide an evidence base to determine the environmental, ecological and economic characteristics of land types across Ireland.

6. Data Sharing arrangements

Table 6 outlines data sharing arrangements for each dataset relating to an Action/Measure. This data will be used to track implementation of the actions committed to in the Sectoral Action Work Plan and will be central to the development of CMWPs and ensuring that each sector is implementing actions at a water body scale. It will be important to document the timeline as to when the data will be made available for tracking and reporting implementation purposes.

Table 6: Dataset information for the Actions/Measures in the SAWP.

Action/Measure	Data Owner/holder	Attribute	Data Sharing Agreement	Target Date for data (and annual thereafter)
Afforestation including Forest Type	DAFM	Spatial data at national level	Open Data Portal	Q2 2025
Native Tree Scheme Areas (NTA1 and NTA2)	DAFM	Spatial data at national level		
Ash reconstitution scheme data	DAFM	Spatial data at national level	Open Data Portal	Q2 2025
Forest roads for private/Coillte forests	DAFM	Spatial data at national level	Open Data Portal	Q2 2025
Culverts	DAFM	Spatial data at national level		
Ecologically Enhanced Forest Roads	DAFM	Spatial data at national level		
Felling data, split into private/Coillte	DAFM	Spatial data at national level	Open Data Portal	Q2 2025
Notification of commencement of Coillte clear fellings	DAFM/Coillte	Notices received by DAFM from Coillte	Data Sharing Agreement is necessary	Q3 2025
Pre commencement notifications on private forests	DAFM	Spatial data at national level		
Attribution on reforestation species and reforestation ground preparation	DAFM	Spatial data at national level		
Attribution info on planned fertilizer use, insecticide use, insecticide type (cypermethrin, acetamiprid etc).	DAFM	Spatial data at national level		
Aerial fertilization licenses including flight paths	DAFM	Spatial data at national level	Data Sharing Agreement is necessary	Q3 2025
Accompanying forest type definition booklet which outlines exact requirements under which each FT is classified	DAFM	Non spatial		
A data dictionary, or similar, outlining and detailing the attributes supplied in above datasets	DAFM	Non spatial		

7. By Organisation

7.1. Work Plan Objectives

The overall objective of the Sectoral Action Work Plan is to address the negative effects of individual pressures on water quality from the sector as a whole and the actions taken to protect receptors and water bodies.

The objectives as a minimum must address those listed in the WAP as set out below:

- **Restore:** The objective of all the Sectoral Action Work Plans will be to ensure the sector will no longer be a significant pressure on water status and will include information on how the sector will address all water bodies *at risk* from that pressure with a plan to develop evidence-based targeted restoration measures.
- **Protect:** These plans will also identify protection measures to ensure that no additional water bodies are put at risk from that sector.

Each sector may include their own specific objectives, which may be over and above the WAP objectives.

1. **Inspections:** Build on the robust standards in place with an equally robust inspections regime.
2. **Acute Water Incidents:** Track all reported acute water incidents and compile an annual report/record on the WFD App.
3. Reduce the runoff of **sediment** into receiving waterbodies arising from forestry operations.
4. Reduce the runoff of **nutrients** into receiving waterbodies arising from forestry operations.
5. Reduce instances of impacts to **hydromorphological condition** arising from forestry operations.

7.2. Distance to Target

The EPA has carried out an analysis of the likely water quality outcomes that may be achieved because of the measures outlined in the 3rd Cycle Water Action Plan 2024: a river basin management plan for Ireland (RBMP, the Plan). The forecast analysis is a snapshot in time largely based on the best available information on the measures being implemented as of September 2023, as included in the draft RBMP. Sectors should have regard to this when preparing their Work Plans. [Targeting measures for water quality outcomes - analysis of the gap to achieving Water Framework Directive Environmental Objectives | Environmental Protection Agency](#)

7.3. Work Plan Actions

Work plan actions are provided in Table 7 and include timelines and KPIs linked to the significant issue.

The Work Plan will address the negative effects of individual pressures on water quality from the sector as a whole and set out:

- The evidence based targeted actions needed to improve and restore water bodies at risk from the sector that are at less than good status. The actions should be specific to the issue that needs addressing. The detail of each measure will be captured in the Catchment Management Work Plan at water body scale.
- The actions needed to protect water bodies at risk from the sector that are at good or high status and ensure that no additional water bodies are put at risk from that sector.
- The proposed timeframe for the completion of those actions.

The Work Plan should identify the co-benefits of water focused measures on Climate and Biodiversity.

The appropriate categories are:

- Water Quality
- Biodiversity
- Flood mitigation
- Soil Conservation
- Landscape
- Climate Change Mitigation
- Climate Change Adaptation

See example from the WAP taken from the Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management (Figure 2).

Management option to address pressures	Water quality	Biodiversity	Flood mitigation	Soil conservation	Landscape	Climate Change Mitigation	Climate Change Adaptation
Creation of buffer strips, e.g. riparian zones, grass margins.	●	●	○	●	○	●	○
Planting of clover and multi-species grasses	●	●	-	●	-	●	-
Planting hedges alongside watercourses & across slopes	●	●	○	●	○	●	○
Liming of mineral soil to ensure optimum pH	●	-	-	●	-	●	○
Agroforestry	●	●	○	●	○	●	○
Planting with native woodlands	●	●	●	-	○	●	○
Interception ponds and constructed wetlands	●	●	○	○	●	●	●
Rewetting peatlands	●	●	○	-	○	●	●

● Management option contributes directly to an environmental benefit
 ○ Management option contributes indirectly to an environment benefit

Figure 2: Extract from Framework for Integrated Land and Landscape Management publication

Table 7: Sectoral Action Work Plan actions

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeline	Progress Status	Update
Forestry 1: In support of the Catchment Management Work Plans, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine will publish a Sectoral Action Work Plan. DAFM will update the 2018 document “Forests and Water: Achieving Objectives under Ireland’s River Basin Management Plan 2018-2021” as the Forestry Sectoral Action Work Plan	1.1: Engagement with POMs WG	NA	NA	NA	NA	Agreement on the development of the template for sectoral action work plans and the CM Work Plans	NA	Q2 2025	Complete	Engagement has concluded
	1.2: Plan Development, Review of 2024 Forestry Sectors Work Plans including water body scale actions for the development of the Sectoral Action Work Plan template and for use in the pilot Catchment Management Work Plans	NA	NA	NA	NA	To inform the Sectoral Action Work Plan template and CM Work Plan template and data for input into the pilot CM Work Plan	NA	Q3 2025	On schedule	In progress including engagement with polit in the Mal Bay
	1.3: Plan Development. Data collation of relevant work plan items and proposed measures on national basis including targets (annual or multi-	NA	NA	NA	NA	Sectoral Action Work Plan and data for input into the CM Work Plan	NA	Q3 2025	On schedule	Currently working though DSA with the EPA

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
supporting the third RBMP.		annual data 2025-2027								
	1.4:	Implementation Tracking: Annual reporting of implementation of measures per catchment	NA	NA	NA	Catchment implementation recorded and accessible via data management system to the public	NA	Q1-Q2 2026 (interim assessment)	On schedule	Currently formulating methodology for tracking
	1.5:	Implementation Tracking: Annual reporting of implementation of measures per catchment	NA	NA	NA	Catchment implementation recorded and accessible via data management system to the public	NA	Q1-Q2 2027 (3rd Cycle outcomes)	Not scheduled yet	Awaiting reengagement in this item once Sectoral Plan is finalised
Forestry 2: DAFM recognises the key recommendation from the HYDROFOR Project (2016) to “cease afforestation on peat soils in acid-sensitive	2.1:	Application of various State Aid rules underpinning the Forestry Programme (e.g. new soil type and fertility requirements, the exclusion of afforestation from undesignated Annex 1 habitats, SPAs and wetland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Biodiversity Flood mitigation Soil Conservation 	NA	NA	Sites on peat soils in acid sensitive headwater catchments not approved for afforestation. Where afforestation does occur, limited to native woodland establishment and aimed at delivering ecosystem services, including the protection of water	Number of refusals arising from post-planting inspections (Form2/3 & Premium inspections).	Annual basis	On schedule	Ongoing as part of Forestry Programme

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
	headwater catchments”, and is applying various water and non-water related policies, procedures and protocols that combine to rule out afforestation on such sites, or to limit it to appropriate multi-benefit native woodland.	habitats) and existing procedures and protocols (e.g. appropriate assessment and the protocol for acid sensitive areas)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lands cape Climate Change Mitigation Climate Change Adaptation 							
	Forestry 3: DAFM to increase the area of forests with appropriate water setbacks through the ongoing restructuring of existing forest stands	3.1 Assessment of applications for tree felling licenses for projects involving clearfelling and reforestation, including the constituent elements (such as referrals to other agencies, public consultation and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Biodiversity Flood mitigation Soil Conservation 	Felling data, split into private/Coillte	TFL’s with a reforestation objective, uploaded to the FLV portal	Applications complete the process and constituent elements within a reasonable timeframe, and a final robust decision is reached to license or not to license. If licensed, any conditions attached adhere to the criteria set out in DEHLG Development Management Guidelines	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Central and constant focus of resources

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
at clearfell / reforestation stage.		Appropriate Assessment, and relevant protocols), within each of the 216 sub basins where forestry is a significant pressure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lands cape Climate Change Mitigation Climate Change Adaptation 			2007. Chapter 7, Section 7.3 (i.e. necessary; relevant to planning; relevant to the development to be permitted; enforceable; precise; and reasonable)				
	3.2:	Continue to bring about the restructuring of forests and to undertake selected forest removal, where required, through the felling licence system and in accordance with the Felling and Reforestation Policy (and also through the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Biodiversity Flood mitigation Soil Conservation Lands cape 	N/A	N/A	Continual engagement with relevant stakeholders (including forest owners and Registered Foresters), to underline the necessity for such restructuring in various subbasins, and to flag the availability of possible supports under the Forestry Programme, using relevant schemes	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Central and constant focus of resources

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
		availability of support for forest owners, under various support schemes under the current Forestry Programme, including the Continuous Cover Forestry Scheme and the Reforestation for Climate Resilience Scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Climate Change Mitigation Climate Change Adaptation 							
		3.3: Continued engagement with stakeholders to ensure the most current and accurate data are used in the assessment process	NA	NA	NA	Data incorporated into the information systems used by Registered Foresters (i.e. iNET) and Inspectorate staff (iFORIS, Ecology QGIS), as soon as possible after it is issued by the parent agency	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Continue to work with NPWS and others in this area
		3.4: Number of field inspections	NA	Coillte felling comment notices & annual report	Coillte commencement notices and spatial inspection data from	60% of felling inspection will take place within these 216 sub-basins. Initially, focusing on the Coillte estate.	Achievement of the 60% rate.	Annual basis	On schedule	Work is ongoing in constructing the reporting structures for this regime

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
				from DAFM of Coillte felling inspection rate	annual report.					
Forestry 4: DAFM to ensure the application of water setbacks and other water-based protection during the creation of new forests, principally realised with support under the 2023 – 2027 Afforestation Scheme.	4.1: Continued engagement with stakeholders to ensure the most current and accurate data are used in the assessment process	NA	NA	NA	NA	Data incorporated into the information systems used by Registered Foresters (i.e. iNET) and Inspectorate staff (i.e. iFORIS, Ecology QGIS), as soon as possible after it is issued by the parent agency	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Continue to work with NPWS and others in this area
	4.2: Assessment of the application for afforestation (with or without grant aid), including the constituent elements (such as referrals to other agencies, public consultation, Appropriate Assessment and EIA procedures, and relevant protocols, such as	N/A	Afforestation including Forest Type	All FT types	Applications complete the assessment process and constituent elements within a reasonable timeframe, and a final robust decision is reached to license or not to license. If licensed, any conditions attached adhere to the criteria set out in DEHLG Development Management Guidelines 2007. Chapter 7, Section 7.3 (i.e.	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Central and constant focus of resources	

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
		that for acid sensitive areas)				necessary; relevant to planning; relevant to the development to be permitted; enforceable; precise; and reasonable				
Forestry 5: DAFM to manage the application of support measures that have a clear role in relation to the protection of water, including: the Continuous Cover Forestry Scheme; the various native woodland and agro-forestry options under the Afforestation Scheme, the Native Woodland Conservation Scheme, and	5.1: New schemes with a particular relevance to the delivery of water-related ecosystem services to be introduced in the Forestry Programme 2023 - 2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water Quality • Biodiversity • Flood mitigation • Soil Conservation • Landscape • Climate Change Mitigation • Climate Change Adaptation 	Afforestation including Forest Type	FT1, FT2, FT3, FT4, FT5, FT8, FT10	The roll-out and subsequent uptake of new schemes included in the Forestry Programme and relating to native woodland and agro-forestry establishment, continuous cover forestry, the restoration of existing native woodland, conversion of conifer stands to native woodland, the environmental enhancement of existing forests, and also, support measures such as temporary bridging programme	Continue availability of all Forest Types relating to the afforestation scheme and all other ancillary supports for forest owners	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continue to receive and approve applications for these forest types (FT's)	

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
	the Reforestation for Climate Resilience Scheme.									
Forestry 6: DAFM to encourage the uptake of Forest Type 3 under the Afforestation Scheme, aimed at funding native woodland creation on public land, specifically to deliver woodland-based solutions for the protection of drinking water sources and water in general.	6.1: Direct engagement with public bodies eligible under FT3	NA	Afforestation including Forest Type	FT3	Number of projects approved under FT3, and subsequently implemented	Continue availability of Forest Type 3. Continue to drive promotion among and engagement with public agencies	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM are currently engaging directly with local authorities on FT3	
	6.2: Training for relevant parties in making applications under the scheme and assessing applications	NA	NA	NA	Training targeted at Registered Foresters involved in developing applications under FT3, and at members of the Inspectorate involved in assessing applications under FT3	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	FT3 training for registered foresters is ongoing through general afforestation training	
	6.3: Awareness-raising targeted at potential applicants and also at personnel of water-related stakeholders, who may direct potential	NA	NA	NA	Awareness-raising through normal promotional means and also via articles and presentations at various water related forums and to specific water agencies	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM are currently engaging directly with local authorities on FT3	

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
		applicants towards the scheme								
	6.4:	Monitor uptake of the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Biodiversity 	Afforestation including Forest Type	FT3	Through in-house records, monitor the uptake of FT3 and the subsequent realisation of approved projects. Identify and address problems identified, exploit new opportunities as they arise.	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continue to monitor and support the uptake of this scheme
Forestry 7: DAFM to launch the new Forests for Water option (Forest Type 2) under the Afforestation Scheme, which offers added incentives to	7.1:	Implementation of a new Forests for Water Scheme (represented by FT2 under the Afforestation Scheme)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Biodiversity Flood mitigation 	Afforestation including Forest Type	FT2	Incorporate as many relevant layers as possible from, other agencies that will support water quality improvement.	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continue to roll out and promote this scheme

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
farmers and other landowners to promote the creation of new native forests specifically to provide water services, including improvements to water quality, drinking water source protection, natural water retention, the improvement of aquatic and riparian habitats, and the expansion of alluvial woodland.	7.2: Training for relevant parties in making applications under the scheme and assessing applications	NA	NA	NA	NA	Training targeted at Registered Foresters involved in developing applications under FT2, and at members of the Inspectorate involved in assessing applications under FT2	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	FT2 training for registered foresters is ongoing through general afforestation training
	7.3: Awareness-raising targeted at potential applicants and also at personnel of water-related stakeholders, who may direct potential applicants towards the scheme	NA	NA	NA	NA	Awareness-raising through normal promotional means and also via articles and presentations at various water related forums and to specific water agencies	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continue to promote this scheme with relevant stakeholders and are open to engagement with interested parties
	7.4: Monitor uptake of the scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Water Quality Biodiversity Flood mitigation 	Afforestation including Forest Type	FT2	Through in-house records, monitor the uptake of the scheme and the subsequent realisation of approved projects. Identify and address problems identified, exploit new opportunities as they arise	Number of applications received	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continue to track uptake	

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
Forestry 8: DAFM to continue to address all forestry-related water incidents, as identified by DAFM Inspectors and LAWPRO or reported to DAFM Forestry by foresters, water agencies, environmental NGOs and members of the public.	8.1:	Effective Standard Operating Procedures for inspecting live sites	NA	NA	NA	Kept up-to-date and available to Inspectorate staff	N/A	Annual basis	Complete	This procedure is in place.
	8.2:	Effective Standard Operating Procedures for responding to, assess and resolve incidents	NA	NA	NA	SOP updated as new issues necessitate it; also, periodic review of SOP	N/A	Q4 2025	On schedule	This procedure is undergoing revision and will be in place in Q4 2025
	8.3:	Continued active engagement with relevant stakeholders	NA	NA	NA	Effective resolution of forestry-related water incidents, following engagement with forest owner and his / her agents (incl. Registered Forester and Operator) and with relevant water-related stakeholders	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continues to engage with all relevant stakeholders

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
		8.4: Training provided to Registered Foresters and Contractors	NA	NA	NA	Engagement through Circular(s) to the Trade with the forestry sector, information notes and direct engagement via training events	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continues to provide training to registered foresters and ecologists
		8.5: Track acute water incidences on an annual basis and compile a report to be shared with EPA/LAWPRO in Q1 of the following year.	NA	Via annual report on acute water incidents	As included in annual report (site reference number and GPS location)	Address 100% of received reported incidents. Track in WFD App. Pursue suspensions and cancellations of licences, implementation of the penalty schedule and legal recourse as appropriate.	Percentage of reported incidents addressed	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continues to address 100% of reported incidences
Forestry 9: DAFM to train Registered Foresters, Consultant Ecologists and machine operators, in relation to the design, and implementation of forestry	9.1 Training of forest owners	• Water Quality	NA	NA	No. owners trained	100	Annual basis	On schedule	Ongoing outreach and training through knowledge transfer groups, funded by DAFM	
	9.2 Training of Registered Foresters	• Water Quality	NA	NA	No. of foresters trained	50	Annual basis	On schedule	Training is ongoing, both in person and online	

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
projects, from the perspective of protecting and enhancing receiving waterways.										
	9.3: Training of forestry contractors	• Water Quality	NA	NA	No. of contractors trained	25	Annual basis	Not scheduled yet	Currently exploring potential approaches to this. The target group are more dispersed than registered foresters	
	9.4 Training of DAFM Forestry staff involved in license assessments	• Water Quality	NA	NA	Number of staff trained	30	Annual basis	On schedule	Ongoing across the forestry inspectorate	
Forestry 10: Continue to seek improvements to the licence applications process for	10.1: Appropriate numbers of suitably qualified staff to access application	NA	NA	NA	Number of applications processes and final decisions issued	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	DAFM continues to assess all applications	

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
key forestry activities.		s for forestry licenses (with or without grant approval)								
	10.2:	Continued engagement with stakeholders	NA	NA	NA	Number of bilateral meetings; development of bespoke solutions and protocols	5 engagements held per year	Annual basis	On schedule	Bilateral continue with NPWS, IFI, eNGO's etc.
	10.3:	Continued engagement with stakeholders to ensure the most current and accurate data are used in the assessment process	NA	NA	NA	Engagement at various WFD forums and also, bilaterals with specific bodies with data, including EPA, LAWPRO, IFI and NPWS	6 engagements held per year	Annual basis	On schedule	Continue to work with NPWS and others in this area

WAP Ref	Action	Key Measures	Multiple Benefit	Spatial Data	Relevant Attributes	Target	KPIs	Timeli ne	Progress Status	Update
		10.4: Review and update policy and procedures in line with new legislation, judgements, research and policy decisions	NA	NA	NA	Engagement at various WFD forums and with specific bodies directly involved, including research institutes, EPA, LAWPRO, IFI, NPWS, and DAFM Research Division	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Under continuous review
		10.5: Number of field inspections	NA	NA	NA	Field inspections undertaken by Forestry Inspectorate (including Forestry Inspectors, Ecologists and Engineers); different types of inspections (preapproval, operation, post-operation, ad hoc, incident-related)	N/A	Annual basis	On schedule	Field inspections are continuous across all schemes
		10.6: Finalise the adoption of validation checks for all licences. Continue to facilitate Pre-Approval Discussions (PAD's) and make the Forest Licence Viewer data public to promote transparency.	NA	FLV data in open portal	All layers	Finalise validation check adoption. Publish FLV Data online.	Completion of both targets in full while continuing to support received PAD applications.	Q.3 2025	Complete	Both processes have been introduced

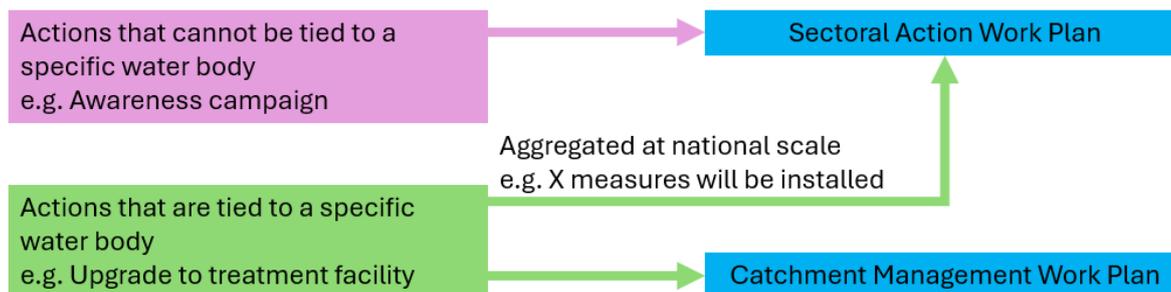
8. Information Flow

Information from the organisation is compiled and shared with the EPA and LAWPRO in the Sectoral Action Work Plan and Catchment Management Work Plan according to its spatial resolution (Figure 3).

Actions that cannot be tied to a specific water body **or** are active in all water bodies, such as awareness campaigns, updated regulations etc. are exclusively reported in the Sectoral Action Work Plan and the associated table.

Actions that can be reported at a per water body scale are reported in the Catchment Management Work Plan and associated table. These are also aggregated and reported in the Sectoral Action Work Plan e.g. X barriers will be removed, Y inspections will be carried out.

Figure 3: Information flow



9. Reporting Mechanisms for Implementation

There are three levels of WFD implementation reporting – National, Waterbody, and Site specific.

The Sectoral Action Work Plan includes general actions and spatially specific actions that are at a national scale. This national reporting feeds into the WFD reporting to the WISE System by the EPA.

In some cases, as outlined above, information is reported at site scale but is aggregated to water body or national scale. It is important to note that existing reporting mechanisms will still be in operation and that they can be modified to allow for the spatial data to be captured. This reporting will enable the effectiveness of the Sectoral Action Plans to be reported at national scale.

10. Implementation Oversight

The tracking of WAP implementation will be through regular reporting to the WFD Regional Committees. The new Programme Delivery Office (DHLGH) will have an oversight role in, the delivery of the actions in the WAP and the preparation of the Sectoral Action Work Plans.

Additionally, there are existing oversight structures in place through individual regulatory means, which specifically oversee individual actions, e.g. EPA regulate UÉ UWW licenced plants (Table 7).

Table 8: Example of existing oversight structures by sector

Sector	Existing Regulator(s)
Urban Wastewater	EPA, CRU
Forestry	DAFM (Forestry Division)
Agriculture	DAFM, EPA, LA,

The reporting structures and oversight mechanisms will need to be further developed with the introduction of the Programme Delivery Office. Each Sectoral Action Work Plans will be subject to Peer Review by DHLGH, EPA

and LAWPRO prior to publication and each sector will be required to review and update their Sectoral Action Work Plan annually.

11. Stakeholder Submissions

The Forestry Division of DAFM have engaged extensively with stakeholders from across the forestry and wider environmental sectors with regards to the formation of this Sectoral Action Plan. An Fóram Uisce, The Water Forum, is a statutory stakeholder body established to advise the Minister on water policy and management in Ireland. The Forestry Division has received and duly considered submissions from An Fóram Uisce with regards to the Sectoral Action Plan. This forum is comprised of representatives on behalf of;

- ICOS – Irish Co-Operative Society
- ICMSA – Irish Creamery Milk Suppliers Association
- Macra
- IFA – Irish Farmer’s Association
- ACI – Angling Council of Ireland
- IBEC – Irish Business & Employers Confederation
- ERCA – European Rural Community Alliance
- IRL – Irish Rural Link
- THEA – Technological Higher Education Association
- SWAN – Sustainable Water Network
- An Taisce
- IEN – Irish Environmental Network
- IFI – Inland Fisheries Ireland
- TCD – Trinity College Dublin
- NRIF – National & Regional Inshore Fisheries Forum
- UCD – University College Dublin
- CI – Canoeing Ireland
- RTI – Rivers Trust in Ireland
- NFGWS – National Federation of Group Water Schemes
- ICSH – Irish Council for Social Housing
- IBRA – Irish Boat Rental Association
- SIPTU – Services, Industrial, Professional and Technical Union
- NYCI – National Youth Council of Ireland

Along with additional information included throughout this report, An Fóram Uisce queried what enforcement DAFM Forestry Division applied to operational malpractice. Breaches detected by the standard operating procedures may elicit sanctions, depending on their nature and extent. This may entail one or more of the following measures:

- The withholding of grant and premiums until appropriate remedial work is carried out to the satisfaction of the Department.
- The application of financial penalties under the Department’s Forest Service penalty system.
- The revoking of forestry licences issued.
- Established sanctions under the DAFM’s Registered Forester system, including an increased site inspection regime applied to projects involving the Registered Forester in question, or his / her removal from the list of Registered Foresters and consequential exclusion from future work.
- Incidences of unlicensed afforestation, forest road construction and tree felling are pursued through the provisions set out in the Forestry Regulations and the Forestry Act 2014. These provisions include the reinstatement of the site to its original condition, and criminal prosecution.
- There are related sanctions and requirements under relevant environmental legislation including the European Communities (Birds & Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, the European Communities

(Environmental Liability) Regulations 2008 (S.I.547 of 2008) and S.I. No. 722/2003 - European Communities (Water Policy) Regulations 2003.

