

Irish National Forest Standard

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FOREWORD



These are exciting and challenging times in Irish forestry, where the objective over the next 30 years is to expand the national forest estate from 9% to 17% of the land cover. This will undoubtedly have major economic, social and environmental implications for the country. As Minister of State with responsibility for forestry, I will be insisting that this development will be carried out within the principles of sustainable forest management (SFM). Following from the Third Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe, held in Lisbon in 1998, Ireland is committed, in perpetuity, to the sustainable management of all our forests. We are custodians of these forests and have a moral responsibility to pass them on to future generations in a much improved and environmentally enhanced form. With this in mind, it is an opportune time to launch my Department's IRISH NATIONAL FOREST STANDARD, CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE and suite of five Environmental Guidelines.

The IRISH NATIONAL FOREST STANDARD outlines the criteria and indicators relating to the national implementation of SFM. Qualitative and quantitative measures are described by which progress towards the practice of SFM will be monitored under Irish forest conditions.

I am particularly pleased that Ireland's CODE OF BEST FOREST PRACTICE is the first to be produced in Europe. This describes all forest operations and the appropriate manner in which they should be carried out to ensure the implementation of SFM.

The suite of five Environmental Guidelines relating to water quality, archaeology, landscape, biodiversity and harvesting, are the mechanisms by which the Forest Service will ensure that the environmental aspects of SFM are implemented. Adherence to the Guidelines is a condition of grant aid and felling licence approval.

The wide-ranging consultation process which took place involved public discussion, expert opinion and the input of sectoral interests including non-government organisations, and is strongly reflected in all of the documents.

These important publications are the result of many long hours of work by the contributors, Forest Service staff and all those who engaged in the consultation process. The implementation in the forest and at national level of the Standard, the Code and the Environmental Guidelines, together with effective monitoring and enforcement by the Forest Service, will ensure that all timber produced in Ireland is derived from sustainably managed forests.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Hugh Byrne". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hugh Byrne TD
Minister of State at the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources