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## NEWSLETTER SPRING 2010

### Chairman's Message

In these recessionary times farm forestry has tremendous growth potential. Ireland can double its forest cover to 20 % of its land area by 2030. The Irish Forest Industry has a proven track record in successful afforestation programmes. Our sawmills are now demanding more timber and the wood fuel market is increasing rapidly. We are a major player in the "Green Economy". All sectors of our society should vigorously support increased afforestation.

As DWOS enters its 3<sup>rd</sup> year we have our own professional Forester Meike Siebel therefore we are providing a growing range of services to our members and other Donegal forest owners (see next page). Our timber processing machinery and forestry software equipment has been increasingly used and added to. We have increased our Forest Inventory from 225 acres to 1250 acres. From this, over 5,000 m<sup>3</sup> of timber is available to enter the market from 1<sup>st</sup> thinnings.

Work has started in cutting and extracting timber based on the results of the inventory. This will shortly be on the market creating income for the woodland owner.

During 2010 we must continue to extract our 1<sup>st</sup> thinnings for the best management of our forests and to provide much needed revenue and employment. DWOS are striving to provide the best professional forestry services at competitive prices to our members.

Managing our forest in a professional way may involve discovering new paths in order to provide multifunctional services in the current challenging and competitive environment. Alternative management options such as permanent cover forestry should be examined and considered.

If you are interested in finding out more about alternative management options, please attend our evening seminars, events and field days/study trips.

*"Donegal Woodland Owners is a growing society which demands high standards. With professionalism, loyalty and voluntary commitment we will succeed in adding value to our timber".*

John Jackson Chairman



Selective Thinning, Ramelton



Safety signs at Thinning Site



Line Thinning, Greencastle

## Short Report from the AGM of Donegal Woodland Owners Society Limited

On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2010 in An Grianan Hotel, Burt

41 members attended, 22 members sent their apologies, also in attendance were Mr Martin Regan, Forest Service, Mr Desmond Lynch, Accountant and DWOS Forester Ms Meike Siebel.

The Chairman of DWOS, Mr John Jackson gave a detailed power point presentation of the past year's activities of the group, thanked all present for their loyalty and commitment to DWOS and stressed the huge potential for growth in this sector.

Mr Martin Regan, Forest Service spoke of the uncertainty of funding for forestry support measures. Grant aid for forest roads would only be available for those productive forests approaching thinning stage. Forest owners should update their forest management plans and check their fire belts and fire plans.

Meike Siebel, Forester DWOS gave a full account of her work to date - the DWOS Leader Project and the growing list of services now available to members. She invited the members to take an active interest in their forests and invited them to the next DWOS Forestry Seminar on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, 8 pm in the Finn Valley Centre, Stranorlar.

Minutes and Accounts were adopted. 5 members were elected onto the DWOS Committee.

A lively, open and frank floor discussion then took place with proposals being adopted by the majority of those present. All members' views were noted.



Podium (right to left): John Jackson, Hugh McGarrigle, Members of the DWOS at the AGM 2010 Raymond Treacy, John Coyle, Martin Regan and Meike Siebel

## 2010 Elected Committee Members

### NORTH DONEGAL

	Leslie Edwards	086 1036216
<i>Treasurer</i>	Charles Doherty	086 8220247
	Stan McWilliams	087 6402450

### SOUTH DONEGAL

<i>Treasurer</i>	Hugh McGarrigle	086 8094103
<i>PRO</i>	Richard Dobson	086 3503588

### WEST DONEGAL

<i>PRO</i>	Thomas Becht	087 2625590
	Daniel O'Donnell	087 2142207

### EAST DONEGAL

<i>Vice chairman</i>	Raymond Treacy	087 2441354
	Michael Mullin	087 6774367
<i>Chairman</i>	John Jackson	086 8175056
	Keith Stewart	086 6006468
<i>Secretary</i>	John Coyle	086 8206714



Elected Committee (back row right to left): John Coyle, Leslie Stewart, John Jackson, Raymond Treacy, Hugh McGarrigle. Front row: Thomas Becht, Meike Siebel, Richard Dobson and Daniel O'Donnell. Missing from picture: Charles Doherty, Stan McWilliams, Michael Mullin, Keith Stewart.

Committee members meet every month on the third Monday evening. If you have any query or concern that you feel should be discussed during those meetings please feel free to get in contact with your local committee member (field officer).

The committee is divided into the following sub-committees, which have additional meetings throughout the month:

- Thinning sub-committee: Leslie Stewart, Thomas Becht
- Business sub-committee: Raymond Treacy, John Coyle, John Jackson, Thomas Becht, Charles Doherty.

The committee members function furthermore as Safety officers in their region.

## Services Available to Members



**FOREST MACHINERY HIRE:** Donegal Woodland Owners Society Ltd allows its firewood processing machinery along with a trained operator to be hired out to its members and non-members. This includes: Timber processing machines for up to 37 mm diameter firewood, Machinery for hardwood thinnings, 12 ton Timber trailer with grab, Tipping trailers, post\_debarker and pointer machine and a timber winch. As our society expands so too will our machinery pool.



**TIMBER MARKETING:** the Society assists its members with timber marketing and sales by pooling resources and hence maximising the saleability of their timber.



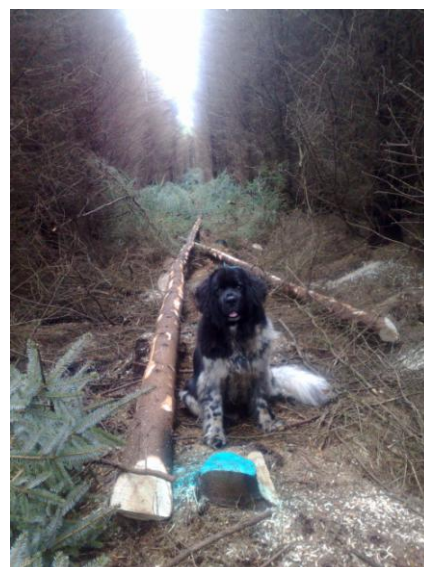
**FOREST MAINTENANCE WORKS:** the Society provides attractive price packages on establishing and maintaining inspection paths and fire breaks as well as planting, pruning and thinning works.



**FOREST ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT:** a registered Forester is working for the DWOSL assisting with Felling Licence Applications, Grant Applications incl. Afforestations, Management Plans, Roding and Forest Inventory work or any other forest related issues.



**A PLATFORM FOR PRIVATE FOREST OWNERS:** through a regularly issued newsletter, website, Field Days, Study Trips and meetings the DWOSL keeps its members updated and informed on developments in the forestry sector and specific issues affecting private forest owners in Donegal.



**If you wish to avail any of the following services please contact the DWOS on 086 0410809 or our professional Forester Meike Siebel on 087 9828223.**

### Personal introduction

Meike Siebel is a private Forest Consultant, registered with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food and a technical member of the Society of Irish Foresters (MSIF).



She first came to Donegal after doing her leaving cert in 2002, to gain an insight into Irish Farm Forestry. Through the next years she maintained the contacts made during this year by regular visits.

She graduated with an honours degree in Forestry from the University of Applied Forestry Sciences Rottenburg (Germany) in 2009. The University is situated at the edge of the Black Forest, facilitating a hands-on education.

She has complemented her studies with further stays abroad, in Ireland as well as in Sweden, where she studied for one year as an ERASMUS Student at the SLU, Umeå.

For her final year project she developed a stand-level inventory for the Donegal Woodland Owners Society as a base for future harvesting and marketing in conjunction with TEAGSC. Her areas of specialisation during her studies included GIS (Geographic Information Systems) and Landscape Management.

Since then she has successfully finished the Leader funded Forest Inventory Project of the DWOS which mainly dealt with identifying suitable woodlands for a stand-level inventory prior to first thinning, assessing them in a hands-on approach together with the forest owner and interested members, compiling the assessed data in a private forest owner friendly report and training members of the DWOS in open-classroom sessions.

She is now working for the DWOS providing a range of services (listed above) to our members and other Woodland Owners in Donegal.

### Forest Fires - Environmental Inferno and Irish stupidity

April 2010 – the highest number of forest and upland fires ever in Ireland

Food for thought, compiled by a member of the DWOS

Over 1500 - 2000 acres of forests have been destroyed and vast expanses (tens of thousands of acres) of uplands burned black. The correct figures may never be admitted. Millions of €'s of growing timber were destroyed. The cost of reconstituting (replanting) the forest areas is going to be enormous. Wildlife and their habitats have been burned on a scale never witnessed before in Ireland. Firemen and fire-fighters' lives have been endangered. Life and property in these rural areas are under a growing fire hazard threat.

Why have there been so many devastating fires throughout Ireland?

It all depends on whom you ask.

The Department may blame weather, rural dwellers and arsonists. The weather, due to a long hard frost with no early growth, left ideal fire conditions when the land finally dried out. Some farmers are of the opinion that it is appropriate to burn dead vegetation so as to "green-up" the hill with fresh green growth. Others rural dwellers burn their rubbish etc and the fire gets out of their control.

(It is an offence to burn vegetation between 1 March and 31 August)

There are people in our society intent on causing serious fire damage. Are all arsonists pursued effectively? Are they made accountable for their crimes? It does not appear to be the case.

Forest owners will give a variety of reasons for the loss of their forest to fire.

"The fire travelled over the hills from miles away, across a land under-managed and under-grazed, with a mat of dead dry grasses, high twiggy heather and dense scrub".

Vast areas of SAC's and NHA's (Special Areas of Conservation and National Heritage Areas) have no fire belts therefore hill fires are now travelling over greater distances than ever before. The upland areas have been destocked. Sheep numbers in Ireland are down from 5.2 million to 2.3 million today. Hill sheep numbers have fallen by the greatest percentage. In the Western areas the farmer has also seen suckler cow numbers fall dramatically. Few livestock farmers are left in some areas. Farmers have been informed by the Department that there will be no payment for ineligible scrub, thereby urging farmers to try to remove ineligible areas in 2010 so as to avoid retrospective penalties.

Today farmers and forest owners in hill areas are being forced into leaving wide riparian areas (along streams and rivers) for wildlife and water protection. These areas are left unmanaged and ungrazed and become potential fire corridors. The same applies along roads where illegal dumping, scrub and dead grasses are allowed to accumulate unchecked. We are creating major fire risks in these areas.

Did the Forest Service see it coming? On 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009, the Department removed the Reconstitution Scheme in the event of forest fires.



Forest Fire, Liam Boyle, near Glenties

## Irish Forestry - a (very) brief history

by Thomas Becht, committee member

The area of the island of Ireland is about 84,000 square kilometres of which about 70,000 are in the Republic of Ireland. Ireland has very fertile mineral soils, excellent for growing grass and trees with a moderate climate. The predominant land use is agriculture. Temperatures range from 4 - 7 degrees in winter and average 14-16 degrees in the summer. Rainfall is very high ranging from 800 mm to 1600 mm depending on which part of the country one is in. Ireland has a comparative advantage in softwood, and some hardwood, production benefiting from suitable soils and climate. We have shorter rotation woods and our growth potential for softwoods is perhaps 16 cubic metres per hectare per annum - about 4 times the European average.

Ireland was once virtually covered entirely by trees and even 400 years ago, the level of cover was at 12% about 30% greater than the present day. For various reasons this had dropped to about 1% at the turn of the last century (1900). Successive Governments sought to encourage forestry but not at the expense of agriculture. Up to 1945, the forest cover percentage doubled - to 2% and experience and expertise was developed. After the Second World War there was greater emphasis on growing timber but it remained general policy that agricultural land should not be used for forestry, so much of the planting was on very poor land in the West of Ireland.

After a further 40 years the forest cover had again doubled, plus a bit, to 5 % by 1984. By then, various studies which supported the case for timber production and related industries had been undertaken; we had joined the EEC (in 1972); there were forecasts of EC demand for timber increasing twice as fast as production (perhaps a questionable assumption) and the tremendous forestry potential of the wet mineral soils which were very marginal in agriculture was being recognised. So the active encouragement of afforestation was rapidly gaining support. However the challenge was to convince farmers that forestry could be seen as an integral part of an agricultural programme instead of being seen as inimical to farming interests.

In 1981 the EU launched a campaign to encourage more private planting and this led to the introduction of what became known as the Western package. Private investors increasingly participated in forestry - led by the founder of our business. Much of the planting at that stage was by Pension Funds and other private investors who would buy abandoned or retiring agricultural land and then avail of grants towards the planting costs. This led to an improvement in the quality of land going into forestry. WOODLAND has its origins in that type of business. However there was poor farmer take-up. The scheme was relaunched in 1985 with grants of up to 85 %. But farmers were not convinced and they had to be if there was to be a dramatic change. In 1988 the scope of the package was broadened further and it was announced that compensatory headage payments would be paid to qualifying farmers (mainly those on low incomes) who planted land.

For the first time forestry became a realistic alternative land use for Irish farmers. There was a modest increase in planting but even more importantly a change in attitude began to take place. Forestry could now take place on lands that were previously regarded as agricultural. The key to this was the support from the European Union. Substantial additional grants were introduced in 1990 and as luck would have it agriculture went through a very difficult time in the early 1980s. The 10 years from 1984 to 1993 produced almost as much increase in forest cover as the previous 40 years. A significantly improved programme introduced in 1993 provided for annual compensation for loss of income for nearly all farmers who planted land and led to an initial dramatic increase in planting in the mid 1990s although this has fallen off significantly. However over the last 10 years or so we have added a further 2% to forest cover. So in less than 20 years we have achieved more than had been achieved in the previous 80 years.

In 2000 a further programme was launched, the result of which is that most planting is now undertaken by farmers; the rate of uptake by farmers is likely to increase as restructuring of agricultural supports gathers pace and as significant change in traditional farming enterprises gains momentum. The Programme for Government, following the 2002 general election set just one measure in relation to forestry - to work towards achieving planting levels of 20,000 hectares. However under Minister Dermot Ahern, TD the budget for forestry was slashed (supposedly to help fund broadband!). Forestry has never really recovered from that devastating blow (it is, in fairness, more complex than that) although the transfer of responsibility for forestry policy to Joe Walsh, TD the Minister for Agriculture and Food in January 2004 initially re-energised the sector. Mary Coughlan, TD was appointed as Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries & Food when he retired and she focussed primarily on food, REPS and related schemes. In 2008 Brendan Smith, TD took over as

Minister with Tony Killeen, TD (Clare) as Minister of State with responsibility for forestry (as well as fisheries). It seems unlikely that planting levels of 20,000 ha will be reached again for some years - unless review of CAP/Rural Development policy makes significant reductions to farm subsidies or unless a new energy/climate imperative leads to directive land policy for forestry. The lower levels of planting are actually good news for those who plant now as they will be growing for a tight market!

Minister of State, Mary Wallace, TD had specific responsibility for forestry from early 2006, having been re-appointed after the 2007 general election. She, with her DAF/FS team, oversaw significant improvements in grants and premium payments, the introduction of the forest environment protection scheme (FEPS) and the introduction of a sophisticated data management system - the benefits of which are coming through; although there are some concerns that the inflexible system is there to control rather than serve. Minister of State Tony Killeen took responsibility for forestry and showed a particular interest in market development.

We advise owners to plan early and to assume at least a couple of months for routine cases and longer where environmental aspects may arise.

Sean Connick TD has just been appointed Minister of State with responsibility for Forestry, DWOS Ltd wish him every success.

## **The interactions of wildlife and woodlands: Challenges facing woodland owners in Donegal**

by Seppi Höna, MSc Forestry (MSIF)

Wildlife ecology has progressed slowly since its principles were first established by Aldo Leopold in the US during the early 1930's. Leopold was one of the first to recognise that herbivore grazers, including wild deer, could have a profound impact on the vegetation associated with the land they occupy. This was quite often due to creation of economically viable land-uses by man which included intensive agriculture and commercial forestry. In the northern hemisphere, wild deer have for many decades progressed to becoming one of the most influential grazing animals to occupy various habitats. Doing so, many species have adapted to new conditions, with many non-native species being introduced for sporting purposes. Due to the demise of many natural predators, natural regulation became all the more difficult. With the rise of globalisation, there became increasing pressure on land managers to enhance outputs and reduce the effects of damage caused to valuable resources, be it timber or grain. A similar situation was slowly developing in Ireland, with the increase in wild deer numbers evident in possibly every county. As woodland owners and managers, we are extremely interested in obtaining the best possible price for our timber, which will be directly influenced by volume and quality. During my postgraduate studies, I discovered that, in some areas that were examined for browsing, over 60% of juvenile trees were found to have been browsed, indicating what effect deer can have on young trees. Browsing can have various effects on trees. Some species can tolerate reduced levels of browsing. Other forms of browsing, particularly terminal bud removal, is generally detrimental to the overall growth and performance of the tree. Broadleaf species are particularly vulnerable, especially from an economic perspective, as a result of their overall higher potential value when compared to conifer species. Various other forms of tree damage may also be observed in woodlands, especially fraying. This is undesirable due to the removal of a lot of the bark from trees, very often killing the tree in the process.

The challenges presented by increasing numbers of deer in Donegal are only beginning to surface. The problems posed by wild deer in Ireland through browsing, including the economic consequences, have yet to be addressed. Most European countries such as Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and Sweden all have measures in place whereby forest owners are compensated for damage caused to their forest crop. This is similar if conventional agriculture is the desired output. Such a system does as of yet not exist in Ireland as a result of discrepancies in relation to who takes responsibility for the deer in the given situation. By law, they are owned by no-one when alive. The DWOS may be in an ideal position to examine which benefits could potentially be gained from deer. Deer are a valuable resource if managed properly. Various issues related to wild deer in Ireland have as of yet received little attention and should be examined in more detail.

Ideally, the problem of browsing could be reduced and an added income from deer stalking could be obtained, especially at present, with the reduction of some forestry grant incentives, in view of the economic downturn. Other forms of income could also be realised in relation to deer management, including the marketing of venison. This is becoming controversial for many deer managers as a result of the restrictions placed on food hygiene regulations. The issues highlighted should become integral components of discussion on forest management in Ireland. Wildlife is ultimately an important aspect of all woodlands.

With the increase in the deer population across Donegal, it is important that this aspect of woodland management is given high priority. The potential damage that can be caused is immense. Integrated deer management has been demonstrated in the past in Scotland through the creation of the Deer Commission for Scotland. Here landowners, the Forestry Commission, deer management groups and estate owners all communicate their knowledge and expertise to solve various issues associated with deer related problems. The DWOS should take a lead role in discussions relating to deer management. A county wide approach, which includes various agencies and groups, would result in more information and the best possible management practices to be put in place. This would enhance the quality and ultimately the economic return from a healthy forest resource.



### **Personal introduction**

Seppi Höna graduated with an honours degree in Forestry from University College Dublin in 2007. Interested in improving his knowledge in forestry sciences and wildlife management, he completed a MSc in Forestry at the University of Aberdeen the following year and a MSc in Wildlife Management & Conservation at the University of Reading in 2009. His thesis at the University of Reading examined the impacts of deer browsing on selected areas of semi-natural woodlands in Donegal. He recently became a technical member of the Society of Irish Foresters (MSIF).

## **HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2010 MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL?**

NUMBER OF ACRES OWNED	RENEWAL FEE
0.247 – 20	€30
21 – 100	€40
101 +	€50

It was agreed at the AGM to make the renewal date for membership of Donegal Woodland Owners Society Limited the last day of March each year. It is hoped to have the annual AGM at this time also as it the correct period to present the independent auditors report on the financial statements of Donegal Woodland Owners Society Limited for the previous year.

**ANY QUERIES PHONE ADMIN DWOS 086 0410809**

# **UPCOMING EVENTS OF THE DWOS**

## **Forest Walk on Thinning of Broadleaves**

**11<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 2 pm - Farm Forest of John Jackson, Teevickmoy, Stranorlar**

Teagasc and the Forest Service in association with the Donegal Woodland Owners Society are organising a forest walk on the Thinning of Broadleaves at the farm forest of John Jackson, Teevickmoy, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal on Tuesday 11 May at 2.00 pm sharp. The event will be signposted from N 13 between Kilross and Stranorlar. All are welcome!

This event will explain

- when to consider thinning a broadleaf forest for the first time,
- how to select Potential Crop Trees,
- which trees should be marked for removal and
- how to organise the work.





**For further information contact Steven Meyen, Teagasc Forestry Development Officer on 087 6775158**

Teagasc, the Forest Service and the DWOS look forward to welcoming you at this event.

## **Evening Seminar on Pre-commercial Thinning and Nature Oriented Forest Management**

**19<sup>th</sup> May 2010, 8 pm - Finn Valley AC Center, Stranorlar, Co. Donegal**

An evening seminar will be held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2010 at 8 pm in the Finn Valley AC Centre in Stranorlar. Prof. Stefan Ruge (Fields of specialisation: International Forest Management and Botany) from the University Rottenburg is giving a presentation on Pre-commercial Thinning and Nature Oriented Forest Management. Topics of the evening seminar include:

-  Introduction to the Donegal Woodland Owners Society
-  Forests and Forestry in Germany
-  Pre-commercial Thinning
-  Nature Oriented Forest Management

This event will be a great opportunity for all Donegal Forest Owners to get an insight into other management options practiced on the Continent. After the presentation there will be room for discussion and exchange.

The event is open to the public and all interested Woodland Owners. It is held as part of the annual study tour of the University of Rottenburg which is the former University of Meike Siebel, Forester of the DWOS. The student group is accompanied by two professional Foresters and two Professors, who are happy to share their knowledge and experience.

**Please text your name and contact no. to Meike Siebel on 087 9828223 if you wish to attend.**

**WEBSITE: [www.donegalwoodlandowners.com](http://www.donegalwoodlandowners.com)**

Have you visited our website yet? You can order firewood, avail of forestry services and read our recent articles: **Forest Review by the DWOS** and **Forest Fires in Ireland - Environmental Inferno and Irish stupidity**. Have a browse and let us know what you think - you can send comments and suggestions by filling out the Contact page online.

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Forest Service



National Development Plan 2007 - 2013



THE DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES & FOOD  
AN ROINN TALMHAÍOCHTA, IASCAIGH AGUS BIA

