

Sustainable Water Network (SWAN)

Forestry practices in Ireland
& implications for meeting the
Water Framework Directive



- Tender Invitation Document | Research Brief -
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Sustainable Water Network (SWAN)
9 Upper Mount Street
Dublin 2
info@swanireland.ie
(01) 642 55 83

1. SUMMARY

The Sustainable Water Network (SWAN) seeks a researcher to conduct a desk-based research project on forestry as a significant water management issue in Ireland, titled '***Impacts of forestry on Ireland's water resources & implications for meeting the targets of the Water Framework Directive.***' This will look at the impacts of current Irish forestry practices on freshwater, transitional and coastal waters, and the implications for Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation, the status of Ireland's waters and the meeting of WFD targets. The research must be based on a wide range of primary and secondary literature, including national and international peer-reviewed publications.

The final report should provide an evidence-based analysis of the impacts of the full range of forestry practices on Ireland's waters, including cumulative impacts and the implications for Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation and the meeting of WFD targets. It will also provide a comprehensive review of relevant EU and Irish policy, legislation and guidance, including a critical analysis of the efficacy of the above to control impacts of forestry practices to meet WFD objectives in Ireland. It will also include a comparative study of management / regulatory regimes in other jurisdictions, and best practice applicable to Ireland. The research will be based on a wide range of national and international primary (peer-reviewed) and secondary literature, in addition to international case studies and best practice.

Based on the above research and literature review, the **key output from the research will be a comprehensive report along with a set of evidence-based recommendations** setting out proposed actions to regulate / manage water quality impacts from forestry in Ireland (including restoration) to meet WFD objectives.

2. PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

Ireland's forestry sector plays a crucial role in the economy and native forests for the environment. With approximately 11% of the land area covered by forests, forestry practices significantly influence water quality across the country. While sustainable forestry can enhance biodiversity and contribute to ecosystem services, certain practices, particularly non-native monoculture plantations, inadequate management and clear-felling have been linked to negative impacts on water quality. This research should investigate the implications of forestry practices on water quality in Ireland, assessing both local and European contexts, and identifying governance frameworks that guide these practices.

3. SCOPE OF RESEARCH

In order to achieve the above purpose, the report should encompass the following scope, and satisfy the following project objectives, requirements and deliverables.

3.1. Specific Project Objectives

- A comprehensive literature review including primary (peer-reviewed), secondary and tertiary literature to provide:
 - Types of forests present across the Irish landscape (native and newly planted) such as native woodlands, large-scale commercial plantations, upland and peatland forests, farm forests and recreational/urban amenity forests. Protections (if any) in place for specific forestry types.
 - Current forestry practices in Ireland (For eg. Large-scale commercial planting, traditional, clear-felling, continuous cover forestry...)
 - Overview of the pressures and impacts of forestry practices on inland, transitional/ coastal and ground waterbodies based on literature, with a particular focus on water quality and WFD status.
 - i. Sedimentation and turbidity
 - ii. Nutrient runoff and eutrophication
 - iii. Alterations in hydrology
 - iv. Impacts on freshwater/brackish species
 - Case studies on specific catchments impacted by specific forestry practices in Ireland and abroad.
 - Case studies, both in Ireland and abroad, where positive measures were implemented to protect water resources from the impacts of forestry.
- An overview of current relevant EU and Irish policy, legislation and guidance governing forestry, licensing for afforestation and felling - pertinent to water, including the inter-relationships between these.
- A critical analysis of the above policy and legislative provisions governing forestry practices including the EU forestry strategy and National Forestry Framework, in the context of the meeting of WFD requirements. This should include:
 - Identification of the relevant competent authorities, agencies and responsible government departments and the overlaps and gaps between their responsibilities.
 - An assessment of the effectiveness of the current legislative, policy and licensing regime for controlling the impacts of forestry on water and on meeting WFD requirements.

- An assessment of the effectiveness of implementation and enforcement of the current policy and licensing regime in mitigating the impacts of forestry practices.
- To identify and draw on case studies of different management regimes, focussing on examples from EU Member States, but examining other global jurisdictions where relevant.
- Based on above, to present a discussion of findings leading to a set of recommendations on how best to address the impacts of forestry practices on Ireland's surface water, and groundwater quality, with the goal of achieving sustainable water management while also meeting WFD targets. Recommendations might include:
 - Control strategies for sediment and nutrients
 - Management of physical alterations to waterbodies (including drainage to prevent drastic changes in hydrology)
 - Regulatory and voluntary measures, including within existing forestry schemes
 - Restoration strategies for water environments impacted by forestry
 - Catchment-specific recommendations, if and where identified
 - Legislative proposals to direct, implement and enforce better forestry management

3.2. Additional Requirements

- To attend an online project initiation meeting, and an interim meeting if deemed necessary, with the SWAN Project Steering Group
- This report will be widely promoted by SWAN as a high-profile publication of strategic importance, which will play a significant role in informing future public debates on forestry. To this end, SWAN expects it to be underpinned by a strong review of literature and to be written to a high publication standard with a high level of interpretation and insight and clear, evidence-based recommendations.

3.3. Deliverables

- Monthly email updates to the SWAN Project Manager
- Full technical report (including an Executive Summary and recommendations), suitable for publication and meeting all project objectives and requirements set out above.

- Draft literature review and draft report to be presented to the SWAN Steering Group for review at phased dates to be agreed in consultation with the Project Manager
- Two rounds of consultation with the Steering Group, this to be facilitated through the Project Manager

4. INFORMATION REQUIRED FROM RESEARCHER

- A description of the methodology, approach and content proposed to deliver the scope of work set out in Section 3, including an outline plan with timescales and the identification of the distinct elements or tasks
- A breakdown of costs (inclusive of VAT), to include the distinct elements of the work (and where anticipated, expenses), clearly stating whether the costs are calculated on a lump sum or time charge basis
- Confirmation of access to the necessary range of international and national academic peer-reviewed journals.
- Links to written outputs from two relevant previous projects.
- Identification of any conflicts of interest.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

SWAN must be satisfied that each potential contractor has the necessary capabilities and resources available to deliver the work to SWAN's requirements and applicants will be assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- A. The applicant's understanding of the requirements of the project demonstrated in the quality of the proposal and proposed methodology: 35%
- B. The relevant skills, experience, qualifications and expertise of the applicant/project team: 35%
- C. Proposed cost and value for money, taking into account the apportionment of time (and rates for this) between the principal investigator/project leader and other researchers, if relevant: 30%

The assessment will be based on written submissions in the first instance, but interviews may also be held, either in person or online.

6. TENDER APPLICATION PROCEDURE, TIMELINE, BUDGET, PROJECT MANAGEMENT

6.1. Project management

The researcher will work closely with and maintain regular communications with the Freshwater Policy Officer of SWAN, who will be the project manager. A Project Steering Group comprising of the SWAN CEO and select SWAN members will be established to guide this research and contribute expertise as appropriate. Communication with the Project Steering Group will take place primarily through the Project Manager but will also include a project initiation meeting and possible interim meetings, if deemed necessary. Regular monthly progress reports will also be submitted to the SWAN Project Manager.

6.2. Tender Application Procedure and Timelines

- Tender submissions should be limited to a maximum of 8 sides A4 at 10pt font, excl. appendices, title page, table of contents, etc.;
- Tender submissions should be sent by email to Puneeta Sreenivas at psreenivas@swanireland.ie cc'ing info@swanireland.ie by 5 p.m., 16th March 2026
- SWAN's target timeline is as follows:

Initiation meeting and commencement of work	April 2026
Draft Literature Review	June 2026
Full Draft Report for review	September 2026
Delivery of final report	December 2026
Workshop with Members	TBD

6.3. Budget

The project budget will be in the region of € 24,000 (inclusive of VAT). For further inquiries, please contact SWAN's Freshwater Policy Officer at psreenivas@swanireland.ie.