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NEWSLETTER SPRING / SUMMER 2009

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

The establishment of the Donegal Woodland Owners Society Limited is very timely. With the 8% cut in premiums, the new income levy and the dropping or suspension of various support measures, the recession is here.

The need for woodland owners to group together to cut costs, achieve better purchasing power and add value to their crop has never been greater. We have to take control of our product, have better hands-on management and create more local employment in order to circulate money locally.

In times of recession, growth areas are vital. Irish forestry is providing many benefits to our economy and environment and has vast potential for further sustainable growth. It is up to us all to build this industry.

I look forward to seeing you all at our AGM on 10th June 2009 at 8pm in Jackson's Hotel, Ballybofey.
John J Jackson

MEMBERS CORNER

“FIRE”- A RISK THAT CONCERNS US ALL by a concerned member

Spring: it's that time of year when the risk of mountain and forest fires is high. Several forests have already been destroyed earlier this year. Currently, with the weather being so wet the risk is reduced. A fire, whether it starts outside or in a forestry plantation will always be a problem for the forest owner. I and other members of the committee therefore attended fifteen meetings with Donegal Fire Brigade at their various stations. These meetings were organised so that Donegal Woodland Owners, Coillte, Green Belt and other interested parties could meet the Fire Service and discuss the issues that arise when a mountain or forest fire starts and the work and problems that occurs when fighting fires.

The main issues I found were that most fires which might affect your forest could be started out of carelessness and the person responsible is unaware of the damage it can cause. Another issue was the lack of early contact with the Fire Brigade, either because one person will leave it to another as they might think it is no concern of theirs or is not willing to call 999 and leave their contact details just in case they are held responsible for the Brigade's call out charge. If you are the first to call, you will be asked for your contact details to eliminate false alarms and to contact you if the Fire Brigade crew need directions to the fire. Mountain and forest fires will always be a problem especially in the Spring when dry, windy conditions prevail. However, by working together, by being aware that early notice is VITAL, we can help to keep the damage to ourselves, other woodland owners and property to a minimum.

- Fires should not be lit near or in woodland
- Check fire breaks and insure your crop
- Have fire plan, cooperate with neighbours, have fire fighting tools
- Be vigilant during dry spells, rapid response will minimise damage
- Report losses to Garda and Forest Service
- Remember... who or where the fire starts, the bills can land!!!

It is an offence to burn vegetation between 1 March and 31 August in any year. If anyone has to do a controlled burn in this period they must inform the Fire Service of this so as to avoid an unwarranted Brigade call out. As you all may be aware, the Minister sent out a letter to all woodland owners that the Reconstitution Grants have been stopped for Fire and Wind throw (from June 30) so now would be a good-time to check any insurance you may have for your woodland. Wishing you all a trouble free Summer.

Developing a stand-level inventory for the Donegal Woodland Owners Society Ltd. as a base for future harvesting and marketing

by Meike Siebel (final year student of the University of Applied Forest Sciences, Rottenburg, Germany)

Objective of the study

The idea of the study was to combine existing guidelines to create an inventory manual for the sampled forest stands that are close to first thinning age and to assess their volume. These estimates can be used as a guideline for marketing harvested wood in the future, building up a continuous wood supply and for making sound decisions. Recommendations are presented for assessing thinning limitations with regards to the owners' management objective, income expectation, the growth development of the trees and the site characteristics (such as soil type, exposure or water regime).

Workflow of the inventory

All together relevant parameters have been sampled in 63 plots distributed over an area of app. 90 ha. To assess the influencing factors the stands have been split up according to their soil fertility. This process is called stratification. The data was analysed per stand and per strata using the newly developed Irish software

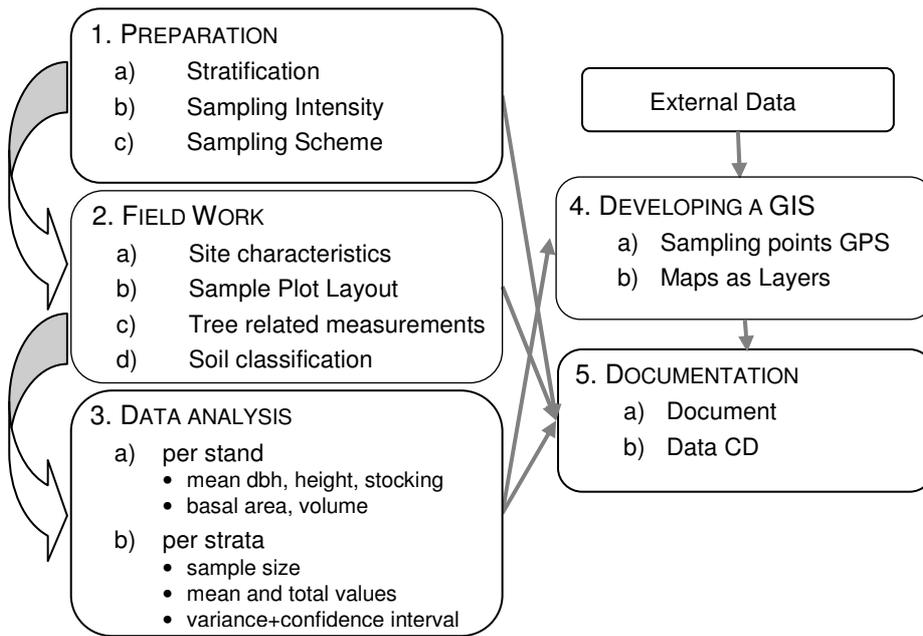


Figure 1: Workflow of the inventory

GROWFOR and two other volume assessment methods, based on the Irish Thinning Protocol and Dendrometer measurements as a comparison to each other. The methods (Figure 1).are described in detail in the study.

Proposed guidelines for assessing whether to thin or not

Because thinning is a management option and guided by the owner's objectives. These objectives are taken into consideration as well as income expectations, the growth development of the trees and the susceptibility

of the site. You can thin even in areas with a high wind throw risk, if the stand is managed towards achieving single tree stability. Single tree stability can be achieved if the trees are thinned at a very early age and at regular intervals. The DWOSL can assist its members in low impact thinning by providing appropriate machinery to avoid soil damage.

How to assess upper (age) limits for thinnings?

Table 1: Statements helping in the decision process whether a stand is ready for thinning

ready for thinning **wait** not ready yet thinning is not advisable or if just very moderate thinning,
 thinning is not advisable because stand stability is low or the stand past its thinning age

<p>The trees:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) have closed in/ there is little or no space between the branches b) there is still a lot of space between the branches of two trees c) have dead branches up to at least 2 metres d) have dead branches up to less than 2 metres e) the green crown is less than 1/3 of the tree f) the green crown still takes up more than 1/3 to 1/2 of the tree g) have already been windblown at the edges of the stand h) have not been windblown anywhere i) grow vigorously j) are stunted 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wait <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wait <input type="checkbox"/> ! <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ! <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> ! <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wait
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General guidelines for the right thinning time are available in the "Irish Thinning Protocol" and dependent on whether or not a stand is fully stocked. But as there are no existing clear assessment criteria for upper thinning limits regarding the age of a stand, a 3-stage approach is proposed in the study. Most important are the

proposed statements (Table 1), which basically assess tree and stand stability and development. These are designed so that they are easy to follow as one just needs to answer the proposed statements and add up the answers.

Recommendations for the assessed stands

Applying this approach to the assessed stands all are ready for thinning, but this thinning can produce an increased risk of wind damage/throw in some of the stands (specific results are found in the study). Unproductive areas should be excluded from thinning, because this would slow down the stand productivity considerably

Expected Price levels

The financial returns that can be expected from first thinnings have been calculated individually for the assessed stands (Table 2). They can function as a base for future marketing and decision making.

Table 2: Average mean and total return for first thinnings (ITGA 2008, 76 *et seq.*)

Stand	Mean Stocking (trees/ha)	Mean Vol. (m ³ /ha)	Mean Vol./ tree (m ³ /tree)	Total net stand area (ha)	Return (600 trees/ha removed)			
					Standing (6.40 €/m ³)		Roadside (7.84 €/m ³)	
					Mean (€/ha)	Total (€/net stand area)	Mean (€/ha)	Total (€/net stand area)
1017	2375	247.25	0.10	3.84	399.51	1534.14	489.89	1881.17
1022	2900	249.67	0.09	1.76	330.39	581.48	405.12	713.01
1114	2350	168.17	0.07	5.32	274.62	1460.98	336.74	1791.46
1128	2675	267.00	0.10	6.40	383.04	2451.47	469.69	3006.01
1208	3100	181.67	0.06	4.00	224.89	898.67	275.76	1101.95
1202	2511	235.22	0.09	14.69	359.48	5280.01	440.79	6474.38
1210	2963	171.50	0.06	11.91	222.16	2645.26	272.41	3243.63
1211M	2200	219.40	0.10	5.25	382.71	2009.25	469.29	2463.75
1211	2840	239.60	0.08	6.40	323.76	2072.09	397.00	2540.81
1212	2450	288	0.12	6.60	451.37	2979.07	553.48	3652.96
MEAN	2636	226.75	0.09	6.62	335.19	2191.24	411.02	2686.91
TOTAL						22569.52		27674.87

For the calculation, price levels have been averaged over the last 4 years for timber sold standing and on roadside. It was assumed that 600 trees/ha are cut. This equals a relatively moderate first thinning as usually 600-800 trees/ha are removed. At a given stocking density of 2500trees/ha, every 7th line could be removed and in the adjoining lines a selective thinning applied removing one in five trees.

Conclusion

Relevant bodies and stakeholders, such as Teagasc and ITGA expect the energy market to grow steadily over the coming years, due to increasing demands for renewable energy and heating systems. The local marketing of a renewable energy source (wood) by the DWOSL might attract high demands in the future depending on legislation (Carbon footprint/ offsetting CO₂-levels) and price competitiveness in relation to oil and potential competition. The DWOSL can stimulate new management practices such as thinning protocols specific to the Northwest of Ireland. By conducting regular inventories it allows the backing up of the newly developed thinning practices with figures, thus showing the management methods which make the most profit and/or are the safest investment depending on the owners' objective.

Implementing inventories and thus assessing the forest resource as a base for further marketing, is a necessity for any forestry business or co-op. Because how can a manager make sound decisions regarding future investments, if he/she does not know the size of the goods he/she is marketing?

In forestry this goes even further, because how can the forest be managed according to the owner's objective, if the manager (mostly the owner) does not know how well/poorly it is growing and hence if it is ready for thinning or not? So the question about having an inventory or not is an active decision about either developing a good (the forest) to its full potential with regards to the owners objective or passively just doing an initial investment and then dealing with the result after 30-40 years time. This does not mean that thinning as a management tool is advisable in any circumstances. But the decision for or against a thinning should be based on facts – a stand-level resource inventory.

MEMBERS CORNER

WOODLANDS – ACCESS AND LITTER by Clive Evans

My wife and I have some 25 hectares of woodland in the southern slopes of the Bluestack Mountains and are interested in walking tourism and tourists. In this area, we have the Bluestack Way which attracts some resolute people both Irish and from overseas.

We farm here and provide farmhouse holidays: a small percentage come for the walking, all are here to enjoy the wildness of this county and coastline. These walkers are no difficulty: but the indigenous walker/rural user is a different matter. I have found such a heavy dose of litter and rubbish left behind in my fields and woods that cannot be ignored in the large plan.

Domestic and personal waste is thrown off roads and paths; the shell of a motor car was dumped in the River Eany Beg (noted trout and salmon river) from my land; broken motor debris left at the sides of my forest road; the road used as a race-track, damaging the surface quite seriously; quantities of abandoned wool clippings, already bagged; worn lorry tyres.

How can I envisage any right-of-way for walkers when this is our common experience? All this litter and rubbish is removed at my expense and trouble (the Donegal County Council were persuaded to remove the abandoned motor car at public expense). An extensive dump of domestic waste has developed in nearby forest land not far from Dunkineely and only a few miles from where I live.

This aspect of countryside abuse is seldom if ever addressed in publicity on the matter. I am now obliged to lock my gates and prohibit access to walkers and others who would like to use my farm and woods, and who have had this freedom up until now. More recently the chain used to secure my forest gate was cut and removed: a vehicle was seen later travelling in the forest and through the farm, gate left open wide.

My neighbours thoroughly understand my predicament, having experienced something similar themselves. The general public needs to be aware of its shortcoming in this respect, including members of walking groups/clubs who should be active in promoting this type of education and not just amongst the converted. I have walked extensively in Ireland and never found an obstruction from land owners. But courtesy and proper behaviour are required. "Leave no Footprint", "Take your Litter with You" are slogans largely ignored by many who use the countryside and until manners and matters change, with regret, our land will not be made available to the general public.

I have not seen anything from Failte Ireland, Coillte, or local government to address this problem. There appears to be nothing done to bring culprits to boot – abandoned motor cars should be easy to identify. The carrot of education for the young seems to be the limit of efforts made to improve matters – but it is not the young that are the culprits.

The penalty now falls on the woodland owners. It should fall on the litterbug.



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