



**NATIONAL CHARACTER PROFILE: N105 Forest of Dean and Lower Wye**

Source: Natural England (2012)

The area is well wooded centred on an undulating plateau of ridges and valleys sitting over shallow Coal Measures; contained by an outer rim of a more open landscape based on Carboniferous Limestone & Devonian Old Red Sandstone that provides examples of active and past geological processes; thanks to the River Wye that has cut dramatic gorges and in Wyese's case, steep wooded slopes; giving the area its characteristic fine scenery. As a result in places extensive outward looking picturesque views are offered westwards across the Wye Gorge to the Black Mountains of Wales, or eastwards across the Severn Estuary to the Cotswold Hills, providing attractiveness for tourism and recreation. Small streams and brooks drain most of the plateau to the east & south-east into the Severn while others feed into the Wye to the west & south-west.

The River Wye SAC is recognised as internationally important for species including white-clawed crayfish, otter, salmon, twait and allis shad. Tidal influence on the Wye occurs as far as Bigsweir. There are rich assemblages of wildlife habitat including: grassland, heathland, traditional orchards and woodland; nationally important assemblages of woodland birds and butterflies; internationally important woodland, river and bat sites; and a range of other rare flora and fauna.

There is a rich historic environment, including Roman sites (such as Lydney Park and the Anglo-Saxon earthwork known as Offa's Dyke that formerly marked the border between England and Wales) and an industrial landscape of iron and coal extraction, quarries, and associated tramways – many of which have been subsumed by the woodland canopy.



**Far left:** A drawing by Henry W Bartlett from 1845 courtesy of the National Library of Wales looking down from the infamous Devil's Pulpit over Tintern Abbey. Note that even in those days people liked sitting on top of Devil's Pulpit.

**Left:** Photograph of the same view taken in 2016 that illustrates Henry's artistic impression may have recorded a much sparser wooded more romantic landscape, however if correct then a more heavily wooded landscape has developed since his day. Note the polished surface on top of the rock indicates continued enjoyment of standing on this spot.

**Statement of Environmental Opportunity**

**SEO 1:** Protect and manage the extensive internationally important woodland for its biodiversity, landscape, and ability to store and sequester carbon. Provide a sustainable timber resource while recognising the woodland's recreational value and heritage, and its contribution to a sense of place and tranquillity.

**SEO 4:** Protect and enhance assemblages of internationally important species associated with the River Wye SAC and River Severn estuarine SAC, employing good land management practice throughout the Forest of Dean and Lower Wye Valley to improve water quality, reduce soil erosion and regulate water flow.

Ecosystem Service																		
Food Provision	Timber Provision	Water Availability	Genetic Diversity	Biomass Energy	Climate Regulation	Regulating Water Quality	Regulating Water Flow	Regulating Soil Quality	Regulating Soil Erosion	Pollination	Pest Regulation	Regulating Coastal Erosion	Sense of Place / Inspiration	Sense of History	Tranquillity	Recreational Opportunity	Biodiversity	Ceodiversity
↑	○	○	↗	↗	↗	↗	↗	↑	↑	↗	↗	○	↑	↑	↗	↑	↑	↗
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**Arrows** shown in the table below left indicate anticipated impact on service delivery

- ↑ Increase
- ↗ Slight Increase
- ↔ No change
- ↓ Slight Decrease
- ↘ Decrease.

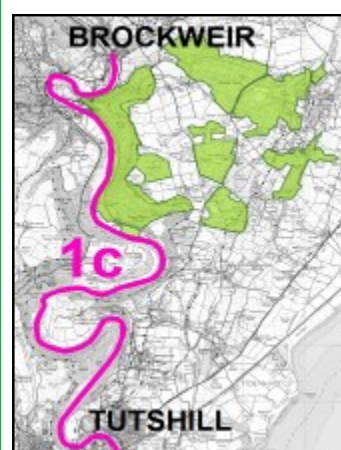
**Asterisks** denote confidence in projection

- \* low
- \*\* medium
- \*\*\* high

○ = symbol denotes where insufficient information on the likely impact is available.

Dark plum = National Importance  
Mid plum = Regional Importance

**LANDSCAPE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT (character makes each part of the landscape distinct and gives each its particular sense of place, regardless of perceptions of quality or value)**

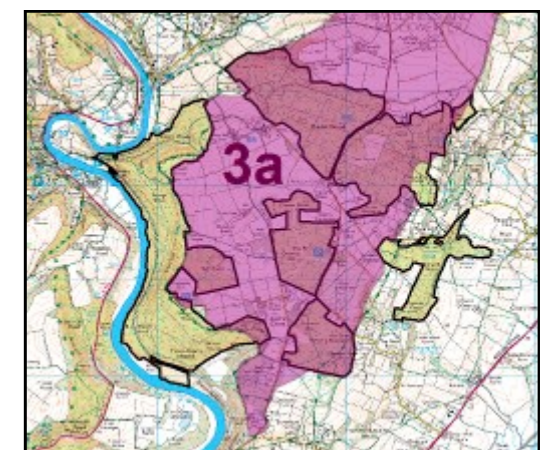


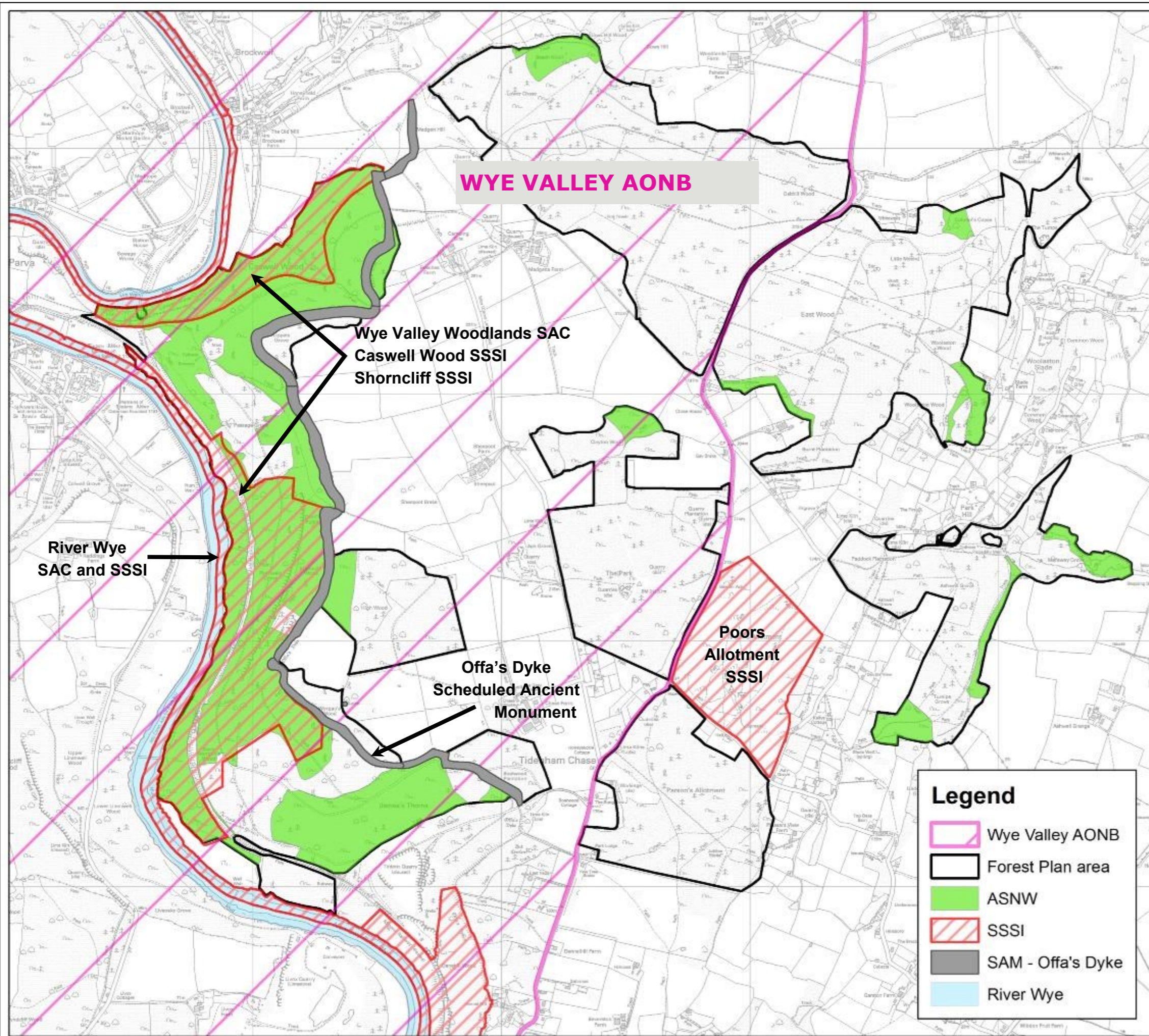
**Wooded valley - 1c Wye Valley: Brockweir to Tutshill**

Landscapes generally enjoy long panoramic views from high vantage points and are characterised by steep sided river valleys and dramatic bare rock faces with densely wooded valley sides e.g. Devils Pulpit. Whilst softer valley profiles are created from the Old Red and Tintern Sandstones creating dramatic and contrasting landscape elements. On the valley floors rivers and streams are characterised by wide meanders that meander gently through alluvial floodplains dominated by pasture and as the Wye south of Brockweir is affected by the tide, extensive mudflats occur along this stretch of the river. The gentle relief of the valley bottoms are often visually linked to surrounding woodland by hedges & isolated trees. Many of the woodlands are ASNW in character with both these & the riverine landscapes being of high ecological and scenic value. Woodlands are also important in providing a great diversity of texture & colour; heavily wooded areas such as Wyese extend from the valley floor to the skyline contrasting strongly with the lush pasture of flat riverside meadows & dramatic rock faces.

**Limestone Plateau - 3a Tidenham Chase**

The erosive action of streams and rivers has had little effect on the plateau that is characterised by level or gently undulating terrain with an elevation of between 180 AOD and 220 AOD fringed by steeper relief give a strong and coherent identity to the rural landscape with expansive views surrounding countryside. Woodlands provide a sense of enclosure creating a backdrop for these wider panoramas. A strong moderately sized field pattern of arable and pasture fields are demarcated by distinctive if somewhat degraded ancient hedgerows. Despite the intensity of farming the open landscape creates a sense of remoteness & space, broken by the verdant contrasting colour of scattered woodland. Tree belts and copses being widespread whilst to the south heathland landscapes at Poor's allotment and semi-natural unimproved grasslands can be found associated with settlements on former commons with significant plantations such as Oakhill Wood existing on Carboniferous Sandstone and Oolitic Limestone geology. The weathering of this geology is mainly by rain dissolving the rock. In some areas, acid soil water percolates the joints widening them to form 'clints & grikes' that make up limestone pavement unique to this area and largely hidden by woodland.





**Designations**

Shorn Cliff and Caswell Wood SSSI cover 69Ha within Wyese. They are Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) being part of the Wye Valley woodland SAC notified for their woodland type (*Tilio-Acerion / Asperulo fagetum*). They lie adjacent to the River Wye SSSI and together with the remainder of Wyese, The Park and Oakhill Wood account for around 75% of the plan area that lies within the bounds of the Wye Valley AONB.

Around 26% of the plan area is Ancient Woodland with a further 49% being PAWs. Further information on this can be found on the Woodland Composition page.

Lippets Grove is recognised as a Key Wildlife site managed for ground flora associated with ASNW and Dormouse interest through concordat with GWT.

The Offa's Dyke is an important historic feature designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Constructed between 780-800AD by King Offa to impose authority & help quell unrest caused by friction between Wales and England in the border region; this feature consists of a tall earth bank that in places still stands to a height of 12 feet fronted by a deep ditch with a total width of up to 60 feet.

The AONB was designated in 1971 for recognition for having:-

- An exceptional landscape—limestone gorge and native woodland.
- Impressive geology—Silurian limestone to plateaux of Old Red Sandstone "Like a set of pie dishes, one within the other."
- Historic legacies—The first Cistercian Abbey in Wales, Iron Age hill forts, Norman castles and pioneering industrial heritage (iron, brass, tinsplate, copper)
- Wildlife interest— Lesser Horseshoe bats, peregrine Falcons, Goshawk, Ravens, Nightjar, rare spp. of Whitebeam and fish such as Shad and Twaite.



### Analysis & Concept

**Analysis:** The plateau of Tidenham contains around 55% conifer. Some are performing poorly due to geology, some due to disease such as CP infected by Dothistroma. A lot of restructuring already achieved through felling and regeneration.

**Concept:** Conifer areas will generally be managed through thinning. Little clearfelling will be done to give the woodland a chance to regenerate and develop further broadleaf character. To achieve this, the thinning cycle in some conifer crops such as CP (except 1st or 2nd thinnings.) will move to a 10 year cycle. Enrichment broadleaf plantings may also be considered on some sites to diversify & enhance native character.

**Analysis:** good development of Broadleaf in Ashwell grove.

**Concept:** Intended to continue development through thinning. Where appropriate extend rack spacing to 20-30 meters to minimise damage to understory eg in subcpt 3745a

**Analysis:** Limestone pavement under varying degrees of canopy, some of which support a variety of interesting flora, especially those in Parsons Allotment and East Wood.


**Concept:** Strive to maintain existing open habitat to benefit the flora invertebrates and Lepidoptera.

**Analysis:** Squirrel damage in general is an issue within broadleaf crops within this plan area and is severely impacting on the quality of regeneration.

**Concept:** Woodlands will continue to be encouraged to develop a more mixed structure, through thinning. Viability for the reintroduction of Pine Martins is being looked into.

**Analysis:** The B4228 meanders through the plan area; adjacent broadleaf belts have been thinned, although potential remains for thinning conifer behind to increase views into the wood from this road.

**Concept:** Continue diversifying the woodland edge through the thinning of the interior conifer and developing the crowns within the broadleaf fringes.

**Analysis:** Horseshoe bats are using the old railway tunnel. (see  on map)

**Concept:** Coupe design and operational planning will take into account management of European Protected Species (EPS).

**Analysis:** Open habitat at the Park continues to be managed through GWT, who use volunteers and graze the site via a local farmer.

**Concept:** GWT will continue to manage and maintain an open habitat structure via grazing that is currently being funded by an HLS agreement through a local farmer.

**Analysis:** Caswell and Shorn Cliff SSSI notified for woodland type area includes tufa formations on bank along old railway.

**Concept:** Manage as per SSSI plan and in liaison with NE. Manage tufa stream in liaison with NE.

**Analysis:** Area of Dothistroma infected CP adjacent to Poor's Allotment is developing ground flora with heathland characteristics.

**Concept:** To develop heathland characteristics to complement open habitat in Poor's Allotment through thinning & felling creating links to Poor's Allotment and The Park.

**Analysis:** The area has high landscape value viewed from the west and is visually sensitive. It provides a scenic back drop for the historically significant Tintern Abbey.

**Concept:** With the threat from Wales of the disease *Phytophthora ramorum*, removal of larch will be prioritised to minimise further risk to the Statutory Forest. Coupe design will take into account high landscape values, along with SSSI objectives and management of EPS.

**Analysis:** Long distance footpath: The Gloucestershire Way runs through the plan area

**Concept:** Thin to continue promoting an open character found elsewhere o/s of plan area.

**Analysis:** From the east the plan area is spread across the horizon dominating the skyline although with high broadleaf content and rolling nature of the terrain blends well with the surrounding agricultural landscape. With the fast moving A48, any disruption in visual flow goes unnoticed.



**Concept:** management will continue to use low impact systems to ensure this remains the case.

**Analysis:** Invasive conifer species such as RC still exist within Wyese.

**Concept:** One discreet area of RC exists that will be removed through clearfelling.

**Analysis:** The nature of the steep stepped terrain makes operations extremely difficult. Linked with fertile soils trees are drawn and very tall, often with a well developed understory of broadleaf. Access is awkward especially in the southwestern corner of Caswell Wood and western parts of Shorn Cliff.

**Concept:** Given the high sensitivities of this site a low impact approach to management would seem appropriate and highly suited for minimum intervention. Thinning will be aimed at development of broadleaf crowns developing an irregular forest structure and minimising damage to understory. Coupe design will take into account SSSI objectives, management of EPS and high landscape values.

**Analysis:** Offa's Dyke is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) & very well used long distance footpath of extreme local importance with good outlooks over Tintern and the Abbey (see  on map) especially from Devil's Pulpit. (see  on map)

**Concept:** Historic England must be consulted for any works likely to affect Offa's Dyke. This will enable sensitive management of the SAM that is on the Heritage at Risk Register.

**Analysis:** The two rivers of the Wye and Severn are both notified as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Conservation Areas (SAC) Woodland management has potential to affect these, especially the Wye with close proximity of Wyese. (also see watershed analysis)

**Concept:** Low impact approach will be adopted especially in areas close to the Wye. A woodland buffer will be maintained along the river banks as a filter against potential run off from forestry operations.