

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



V October 2022

## MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN

***Overarching goal: To maintain and improve the woods for their biodiversity and, in doing this, improve their value for people.***

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1. **Introduction**
2. **Overarching goal**
3. **Guiding principles**
4. **Into the future**
5. **Appendix**
  - Tunnel Wood management plan & compartment map.
  - Myross Wood management plan & compartment map.
  - Ancient woodland indicator species.

### **Introduction.**

Over the period 2021-2 we have been investigating the c12 ha (c30acres) of woodland in the Myross Wood House estate. There will continue to be a lot to learn about these places, but we feel ready to lay out a broad direction of travel for the two woodland blocks - as we are calling them: *Myross Wood* (c4ha) and *Tunnel Wood* (c8ha).

We start with woods that clearly come from an 'Old Oak Woodland' origin – a habitat type listed under Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive and reported on in terms of their condition at a national level <sup>1</sup> as 'overall status: bad'.

Typical species in this habitat include the trees: sessile oak, holly, downy birch and rowan; low woody species such as honeysuckle, ivy, and bilberry; ferns such as buckler ferns and hard fern; and great wood-rush; all of which we find at Myross. The Old Oak woods at Myross – a high rainfall area – may fall into a western oceanic subtype that is rich in bryophytes, lichens and filmy ferns. We have more work to do to confirm this.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 39

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS\\_2019\\_Vol1\\_Summary\\_Article17.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol1_Summary_Article17.pdf)

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



More specifically using the standard typology<sup>2</sup> of habitat types across Ireland the woods at Myross are dominated by the semi-natural *Oak-birch-holy* WN1 type blending into *Oak-ash-hazel* WN2. In parts, particularly in the western compartments of Tunnel Wood, there may be enough planting (but still <25% cover) of conifers to adopt the highly modified *mixed broadleaved woodland* WD1 category. Finally, the ex-Sitka dominated forestry areas flattened by Storm Ophelia (2017) currently clearly fall into the type *Scrub* WS1.

On top of this broad native woodland origin though we can layer a long history of change, manipulation and pressure. So, we can see:

- Extensive planting of non-native tree species such as beech, sycamore & Silver Fir and in more recent decades Sitka spruce (flattened by Storm Ophelia).
- Significant on-going pressures from invasive non-native shrub species such as Rhododendron and cherry laurel.

On the more positive side we haven't yet seen evidence of grazing by deer (which can severely reduce tree regeneration).

We know something of the older history of the woods too with mapped evidence of their presence back to at least 1777 (the 'Taylor and Skinner' map) and then the significant impact in the woods of the development of Myross Wood House and its owners and then again, the missionary community there in more recent times. These impacts included planting, the laying out of a path network (now largely subsumed or lost), rock cutting to create the 'Tunnel' and both physical features left by the missionaries and then their more domestic planting of flowering shrubs in the entrance to Myross Wood.

'Ancient woodland' is a term that refers to those that have had continuous woodland cover since before planting and afforestation became common practices (mid-1600s). These sites are more likely to have natural origins and may form a link with the prehistoric wildwood. Ancient woodland sites often contain biodiversity that is confined to, and dependent for their existence upon, continued cover of semi-natural woodland. We know the woods at Myross were present (on maps) around the period c1770 and we can also add some further preliminary information from species found at Myross and identified in a national study as frequently found in ancient woods. In Appendix 1 we begin (from the briefest of surveys in Myross Wood in 2022) to list the 'more frequently found' species we have located – 17 out of 29 potential species on the national list. Are the woods at Myross ancient? We need to get really recording species in 2023 to get a stronger feel...

So, we start with woods rich in biodiversity but ones with a history of change. The rich biodiversity is underlined by Myross Wood itself being a highly protected site<sup>3</sup> as a 'Special Area of Conservation' (SAC). Of particular note here is the presence of a population of

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<sup>2</sup> <https://biodiversityireland.ie/habitats/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.npws.ie/protected-sites/sac/001070>

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



legally protected Killarney Fern<sup>4</sup>, a large filmy fern that is extremely sensitive to desiccation and is restricted to damp, shady and humid habitats. We have a real duty to do our best to maintain the woods in good condition for this special species. To do this we have established a dialogue with NPWS – the state agency for biodiversity. In fact, everything we do that might adversely affect the ecology of Myross Wood must be consented by them.

## Overarching goal.

As we go about restoring the woods our goal is:

***To maintain and improve the woods for their biodiversity and, in doing this, improve their value for people.***

## Guiding principles.

As we develop our management plans and a work programme to go alongside these, we are adopting some principles to guide our work:

- A. **Continually learn about the biodiversity** of the woods and adapt our plans as necessary.
- B. **Provide public access** and enable people's enjoyment of the woods.
- C. **Continually build an active support group** (the 'Friends of') in this work.
- D. **Focus on woodland structure and cover:** our aim is for:  
*a diverse structure with a relatively closed canopy containing mature trees; a sub canopy layer with semi-mature trees and shrubs; and a well-developed herb and ground layer.*
- E. **Focus on native tree cover.** Our target species is the sessile oak. Over time our goal is to see sessile oak cover at least 50% of the canopy.
- F. **Develop a stock proof boundary.** Maintain and improve, as far as possible, existing stock proof boundaries. Investigate opportunities for the same in other parts of the boundary system around the woods.
- G. **Monitor for deer/natural regeneration** (seedlings). Overgrazing will be a real challenge to the woods. Signs of deer would include browse lines, dung and bark stripping.

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<sup>4</sup> Page 44

[https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS\\_2019\\_Vol1\\_Summary\\_Article17.pdf](https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/publications/pdf/NPWS_2019_Vol1_Summary_Article17.pdf)

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



- H. **Value dead wood.** Old senescent trees, standing dead trees, fallen dead wood and rotten stumps are all valuable and integral to a healthy functioning woodland ecosystem. These need to be retained on site.
- I. **Removed trees will be left** on site as habitat piles.
- J. **Removal of Rhododendron & laurel** will use current best practice and seek to continually reduce the presence of these (& other) damaging invasives.
- K. **Respect the history and culture of previous users of the woods.** We know something of these histories e.g., the statuary of the missionaries & the path systems of the 1800s period. We will want to, where we can, maintain or pay homage (record) to these.

In terms of learning, monitoring and adapting our Plan its worth noting that we commissioned a high-quality set of ariel (drone) photos shot in late February 2022. These are stored in shared folders in the CECAS files.

## Into the future

We are ambitious to progress restoration of the woods but how we do this will depend on the mix of knowledge, funds and person power we can bring to the tasks. At this stage we can list a series of headline work streams:

1. **Build knowledge of the biodiversity of the woods.** There's an exciting few years ahead of recording – across all groups of organisms – so much to discover!
2. **Set out a work programme for invasive species management.**
3. **Identify and create an inventory of 'veteran trees.** These older trees are especially important for bryophytes, lichens etc. Their retention is key.
4. **Establish a monitoring approach.** How is the biodiversity of the woods fairing? How will we know?
5. **Adapt our management plans** on the basis of (1) & (4). As we learn more about the woods, we will want to change our plans.
6. **Learn more, and plan for, how we can respect the history and culture of previous users of the woods.** On a practical level we know we inherit a series of features and we need to think about how we respect these. In some cases, this will mean, where we can, maintaining them. In others we will want to at least record these features and their stories.
7. **Plan and develop new access routes** for the public. There may be some easier wins here, but we do need think impacts on biodiversity plus of course think hard about safety issues for visitors.
8. **Build an outreach programme.** We want more people to value and use the woods.

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



9. **React to change.** With climate destruction on us we know there will be real impacts from this on the woods e.g. major storm events & new tree diseases. We will need to be adaptive to these sorts of impacts.
10. **Celebrate our work in the woods.** We will want to celebrate the contribution of the work in the woods to the overarching goals of the CECAS project, as a centre of excellence for climate action and sustainability.

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



## Appendix

### TUNNEL WOOD – MANAGEMENT PLAN

V Oct 2022

	COMPARTMENT										
	11 Steep	12 Slope	13 Rock	14 Willow	15 Scrubland	16 Road	17 Harbour	18 Face	19 Quarry	20 Stream	21 Gatehouse
Fossitt habitat category~	WD1	WN6	WD1	WN6	WS1	WD1	WN1	WD1	WN2	WN2	WS1
<b>ACTION</b>											
Retain all native trees											
Enable natural regeneration of native species											
Plant new native tree species			A	B	C						C
Remove non-native tree species (under 3m)											
Remove non-native tree species (3m+)											
Remove Laurel	S		L				S	M	L	L	M
Remove Rhododendron											
Remove Pheasant Berry		M									
Cut new access path/s (firstly for management).											
Pollard/coppice a sample (tbd) of poor quality (tall/spindly) oak											

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



**Notes:**~ Habitat categories from Irelands standard classification: Fossitt JA, 2000, A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council. Key: **WN1** Oak-birch-holly-woodland; **WN2** Oak-ash-hazel woodland; **WN6** Wet willow-alder-ash woodland; **WD1** (Mixed) broadleaved woodland; **WS1** Scrub; **WS2** Immature woodland.

*More...*

**A** Plant trees where non-native trees/shrubs are removed.

**B** Maintain as a willow bed. 1) Needs survey of Salix Spp; 2) on basis of (1) consider planting other Salix Spp?; 3) consider a regular cutting cycle (poss c5 yearly?).

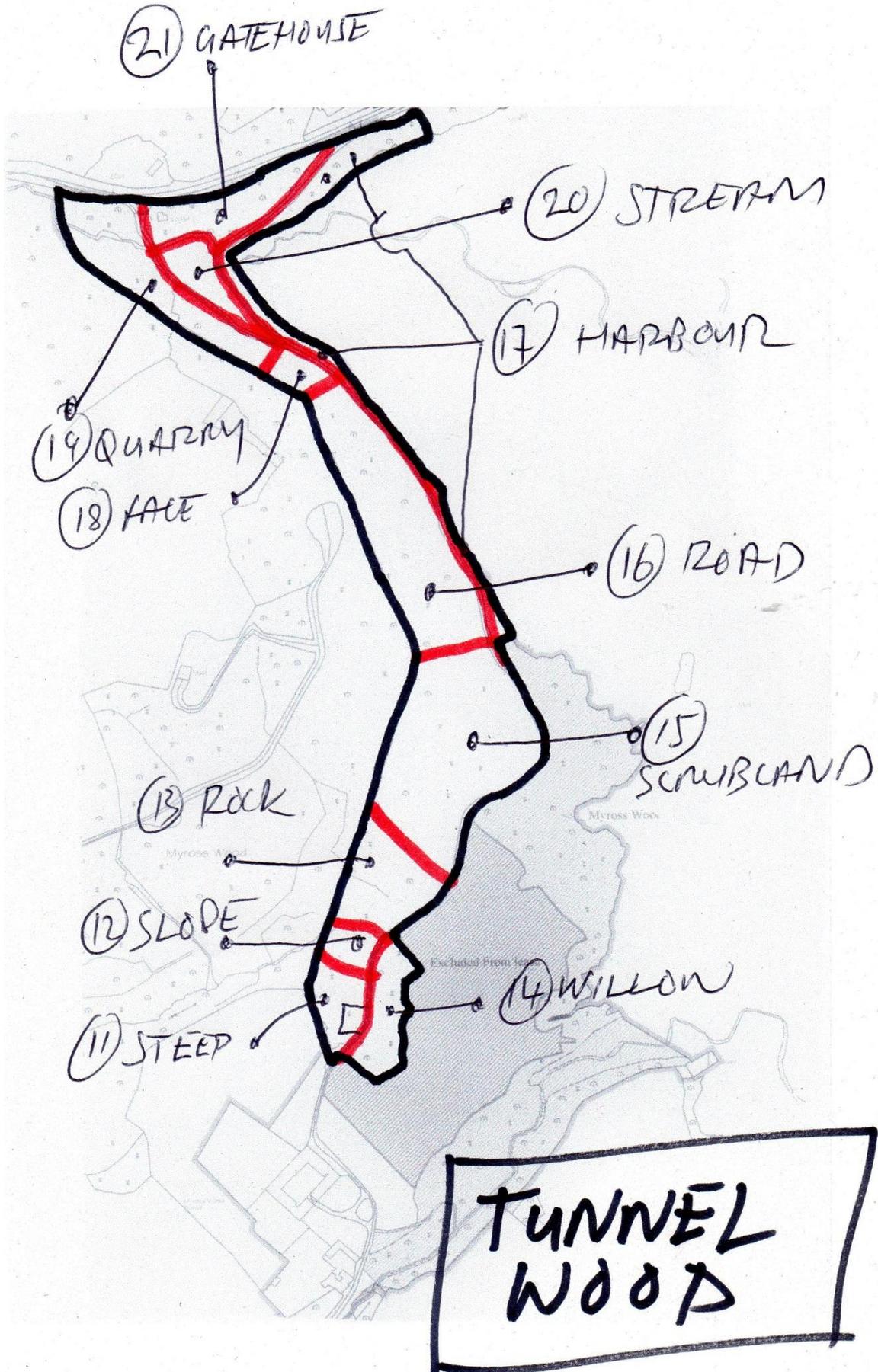
**C** Monitor regeneration here. Plant some (volume to be defined) native Spp if seed source seems lacking (e.g. Sessile Oak).

**D** Including for access to the gatehouse building and its maintenance

**S.** Management task – ‘Small’

**M.** Management task – ‘Medium’.

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



## MYROSS WOOD – MANAGEMENT PLAN

V Oct 2022

	COMPARTMENT									
	1 House	2 Gulley West	3 Gulley East	4 Upper Bridge	5 Big Field*	6 Lower Bridge	7 Jetty	8 Bliss	9 Stagshead	10 Ophelia
Fossitt habitat category~	WS2	WN1	WN1	WN1	WN2	WN1	WN1	WN2	WN1	WS2
<b>ACTION</b>										
Retain all native trees										
Enable natural regeneration of native species										
Plant new native tree species	1									5
Remove non-native tree species (under 3m)								3		
Remove non-native tree species (3m+)					2			3		4
Remove Laurel	S		M	M	M	M	M			4
Remove Rhododendron	S			S	S					4
Remove bamboo		M		M						
Cut new access path/s (firstly for management).										
Pollard/coppice poor quality (tall/spindly) oak (<10 individuals)										
Killarney Fern^ Zone. <b>NO ACTION</b> till All NPWS expert study (expected 2023).					Eastern Half*					

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



Notes:

*Below...*

~ Habitat categories from Irelands standard classification: Fossitt JA, 2000, A Guide to Habitats in Ireland. The Heritage Council. Key: **WN1** Oak-birch-holly-woodland; **WN2** Oak-ash-hazel woodland; **WN6** Wet willow-alder-ash woodland; **WD1** (Mixed) broadleaved woodland; **WS1** Scrub; **WS2** Immature woodland.

1. In summer 2022 this compartment is an area of windfall (large cherries) and exotic (domestic) planting including the remains of a 'Remembrance Garden'. The Plan is to plant this with native trees: oak, hazel, holly with a small number of lesser native species.
2. Ring bark 5m+ Sitka. (c10 individuals).
3. Lots of Beech & Sycamore in eastern part. First task - remove under 3m trees.
4. 'Watching brief' – currently hard to access – but with some new paths invasives might be unidentified for removal.
5. Introduce Oak (sessile) as necessary (for future seed source).

^ The Killarney Fern is a highly protected species, listed on both Annex II & IV of the Habitats Directive and on the Irish Flora Protection Order (FPO). In late summer 2021 we commissioned a rapid assessment of the condition of the known colonies at Myross with the expert report back to us noting: *all of the colonies that were located were found to be in excellent health*. Nonetheless at this stage of our work at Myross Wood we are adopting a approach of no actions of any kind in a precautious zone (agreed in dialogue with NPWS) – see above (highlighted in green).

\* While we wait for explicit NPWS guidance on managing for the Killarney Fern we have agreed to divide compart 5 into two taking a line from the upper bridge to the topmost of the concrete steps and continuing this northwest to the boundary of the SAC. North and west of the topmost step the line follows the east side of a clear glade to a large Ash tree near the boundary.

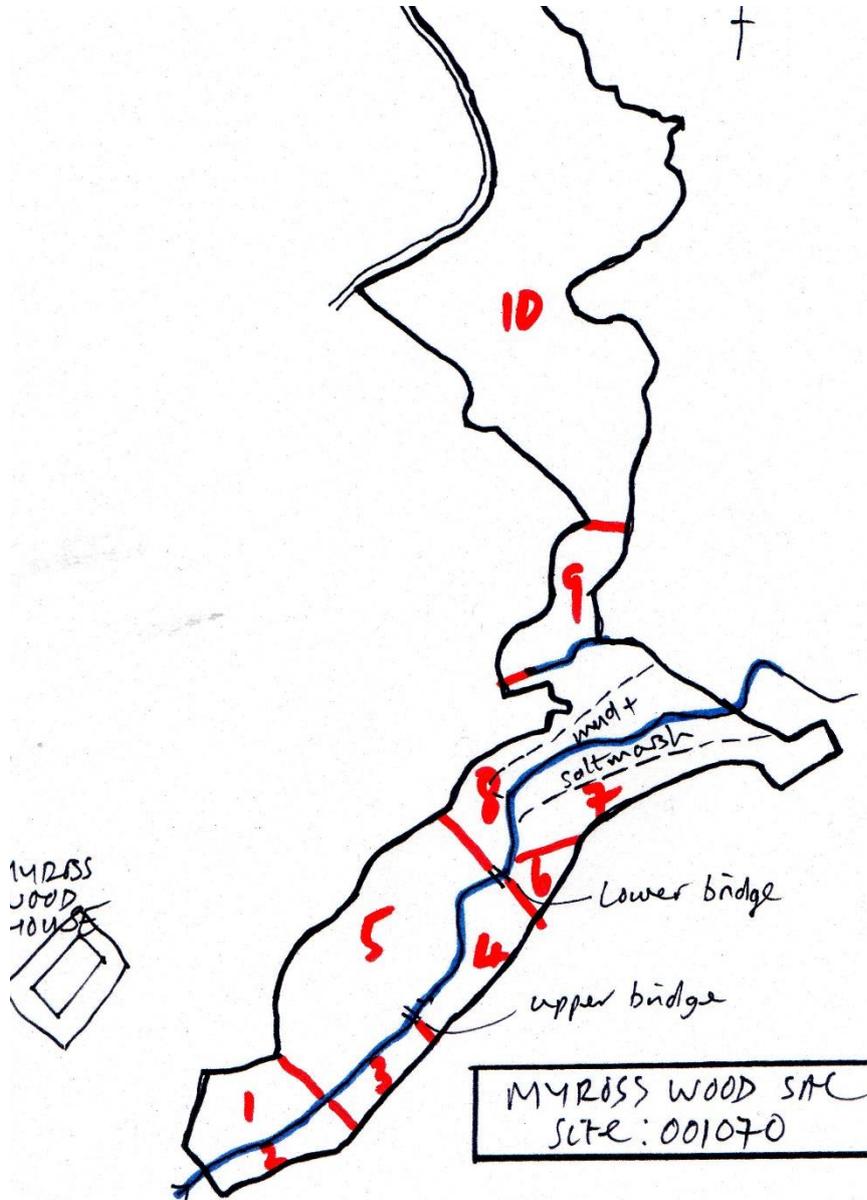
S. Management task – 'Small'

M. Management task – 'Medium'.

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



## Species found at Myross Wood 2022 that were more frequently found at Possible Ancient woodlands/Ancient Woodlands in a national study of Ancient Woods across Ireland.

Table adapted from: Ancient and long-established woodland inventory: Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 46, Philip M. Perrin and Orla H. Daly 2010 - Table 12: Species significantly more frequent in PAW (Possible ancient woodlands) /AW (Ancient Woodlands) stands than in RW (Recent Woodland) stands

Species retained as PAW/AW indicators in national survey and found at Myross Wood 2022			
1	Ajuga reptans	Bugle	✓ <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajuga_reptans">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ajuga_reptans</a>
2	Allium ursinum	Wild garlic	✓
3	Anemone nemorosa	Wood anemone	✓ <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allium_ursinum">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allium_ursinum</a>
4	Arbutus unedo	Strawberry tree	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arbutus_unedo">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arbutus_unedo</a>
5	Cardamine flexuosa	Wavy bittercress or wood bittercress	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardamine_flexuosa">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cardamine_flexuosa</a>
6	Carex sylvatica	Wood sedge	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carex_sylvatica">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carex_sylvatica</a>
7	Conopodium majus	Pignut	✓ <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conopodium_majus">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conopodium_majus</a>
8	Corylus avellana	Hazel	✓ <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corylus_avellana">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corylus_avellana</a>
9	Dryopteris aemula	Hay-scented buckler-fern	✓ <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dryopteris_aemula">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dryopteris_aemula</a>
10	Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	✓ <a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euonymus_europaeus">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euonymus_europaeus</a>
11	Euphorbia hyberna	Irish spurge	✓ <a href="https://www.brc.ac.uk/plantatlas/plant/euphorbia-hyberna">https://www.brc.ac.uk/plantatlas/plant/euphorbia-hyberna</a>
12	Galium odoratum	Sweet woodruff or	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galium_odoratum">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Galium_odoratum</a>

# MYROSS WOODS – MANAGEMENT PLAN 2022



		sweetscented bedstraw,		
1 3	Geum rivale	Water avens		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geum_rivale">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geum_rivale</a>
1 4	Glechoma hederacea	Ground ivy	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glechoma_hederacea">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glechoma_hederacea</a>
1 5	Hyacinthoides non-scripta	Bluebell	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyacinthoides_non-scripta">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hyacinthoides_non-scripta</a>
1 6	Hypericum androsaemum	Tutsan	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypericum_androsaemum">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hypericum_androsaemum</a>
1 7	Luzula sylvatica	Woodrush	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luzula_sylvatica">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luzula_sylvatica</a>
1 8	Lysimachia nemorum	Yellow pimpernel		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysimachia_nemorum">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lysimachia_nemorum</a>
1 9	Malus sylvestris	Crab apple		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malus_sylvestris">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malus_sylvestris</a>
2 0	Oxalis acetosella	Wood sorrel	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxalis_acetosella">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oxalis_acetosella</a>
2 1	Populus tremula	Aspen		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populus_tremula">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Populus_tremula</a>
2 2	Potentilla sterilis	Strawberryleaf cinquefoil or Barren strawberry		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potentilla_sterilis">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Potentilla_sterilis</a>
2 3	Quercus petraea	Sessile oak	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quercus_petraea">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quercus_petraea</a> - stalked leaves and stalkless (sessile) acorns
2 4	Ranunculus ficaria	Lesser celandine or Pilewort	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficaria_verna">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficaria_verna</a>
2 5	Rumex sanguineus	Wood dock		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumex_sanguineus">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rumex_sanguineus</a>
2 6	Silene dioica	Red campion	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silene_dioica">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silene_dioica</a>
2 7	Stellaria holostea	Greater stitchwort		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabelera">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rabelera</a>
2 8	Ulmus glabra	Wych elm		<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulmus_glabra">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ulmus_glabra</a>
2 9	Veronica montana	Wood speedwell	✓	<a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veronica_montana">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veronica_montana</a>