



Appropriate Assessment Screening Determination

Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC National Ecosystem Monitoring Network Level 2 Site, Wolftrap, County Laois

Under the National Emission reduction Commitments Directive (NECD 2016/2284), it is required that air pollution impacts and ecological effects on sensitive habitats are monitored within all European Union (EU) Member States. This monitoring is required to cover sensitive habitats including but not limited to, freshwaters, forests, bogs, grasslands, heathlands, etc. Ireland's response to this requirement was the development of the National Ecosystem Monitoring Network (NEMN). The EPA is the competent authority for co-ordinating this network, which relies on input and monitoring from other state bodies. Atmospheric monitoring required for Level 2 sites within this network, needs to be installed on/near many Natura 2000 sites. Hence, appropriate assessment screening has been carried out by the EPA to ensure installation of such equipment complies with requirements of the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended.

In accordance with Regulation 42(1) of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 as amended, the Agency has undertaken appropriate assessment screening to assess, in view of best scientific knowledge and the conservation objectives of the site, if the installation or operation of such monitoring, individually or in combination with other plans or projects is likely to have a significant effect on a European Site(s). In this context, particular attention was paid to European Sites listed below;

- Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC
- Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA
- River Barrow & Niver Nore SAC
- Clonaslee Eskers & Derry Bog SAC
- Charleville Wood SAC)

AA Screening Determination:

That the activity is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the site as a European site and that it can be excluded, on the basis of objective information, that the activity, individually or in combination with other plans or projects will have a significant effect on a European site, and accordingly the Agency determined that an Appropriate Assessment of the activity was not required.

This determination is based on the following:

- That this atmospheric monitoring installation is not likely to have significant effects on any European Site due to the nature and scale of the activities.
- Potential disturbance caused by trampling arising from access to monitoring location is so minimal it does not constitute an effect.
- Installation and operation of the proposed monitoring cannot influence rivers and hence potential for impacts to Natura 2000 sites connected via waterways has been ruled out.
- Though proposed monitoring will occur within Slieve Bloom Mountains SAC and Slieve Bloom Mountains SPA, it will have no significant effects on the maintenance or restoration of favourable conservation conditions for any of the qualifying features.
- The equipment can be carried easily to the proposed monitoring site without traversing or adversely affecting any Natura 2000 site.
- Proposed monitoring equipment cannot interact with other plans or projects to result in a cumulative impact or adversely effect any nearby Natura 2000 sites cumulatively.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Brendan Wall'.

Brendan Wall, Office of Radiation Protection and Environmental Monitoring
Environmental Protection Agency