Sustainable Forest Management and the Protection of Water in the UK

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Forestry as a Potential Pressure:

Large-scale upland conifer afforestation during the 1970’s and 80’s was associated with a number of water problems, including acidification, siltation eutrophication and local flooding.
Development of Best Practice Measures:

The Guidelines address all forestry-related pressures and provide a wide range of measures to protect and enhance the freshwater environment. Regular review ensures that they continue to reflect recent legislation, policy, experience and research.
Promoting Woodland Benefits for Water:

Woodland creation is an effective measure for tackling the larger pressures associated with agricultural and urban activities, by:

- Protecting sensitive soils and intercepting diffuse pollutants
- Enhancing riparian and aquatic habitats, including reducing thermal stress
- Reducing rapid runoff and attenuating flood flows
Opportunity Mapping for Woodland Creation:
Developing Payments for Water Services:

Limited progress to date, with focus on adjusting scoring systems and enhancing planting grants to target sites where woodland creation will deliver greatest water benefits.
Conclusions:

- Continued development and implementation of best management practice should ensure that existing forests protect and enhance the freshwater environment, help to conserve water resources and reduce local flooding.

- There is great scope for woodland creation to help reduce the marked pressures exerted by agriculture and urban development. However, there is a need to strengthen the evidence base to underpin policy and increase financial incentives. Communication must also be improved.

- Better integration of forest and water policy, plans and measures will be vital to achieving good water status and the sustainable management of water resources.