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Conservation Objectives Series

Meenaguse Scragh SAC 001880

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Introduction

The overall aim of the Habitats Directive is to maintain or restore the favourable conservation status of habitats and species of community interest. These habitats and species are listed in the Habitats and Birds Directives and Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas are designated to afford protection to the most vulnerable of them. These two designations are collectively known as the Natura 2000 network.

European and national legislation places a collective obligation on Ireland and its citizens to maintain habitats and species in the Natura 2000 network at favourable conservation condition. The Government and its agencies are responsible for the implementation and enforcement of regulations that will ensure the ecological integrity of these sites.

A site-specific conservation objective aims to define favourable conservation condition for a particular habitat or species at that site.

The maintenance of habitats and species within Natura 2000 sites at favourable conservation condition will contribute to the overall maintenance of favourable conservation status of those habitats and species at a national level.

Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when:

- its natural range, and area it covers within that range, are stable or increasing, and
- the specific structure and functions which are necessary for its long-term maintenance exist and are likely to continue to exist for the foreseeable future, and
- the conservation status of its typical species is favourable.

The favourable conservation status of a species is achieved when:

- population dynamics data on the species concerned indicate that it is maintaining itself on a long-term basis as a viable component of its natural habitats, and
- the natural range of the species is neither being reduced nor is likely to be reduced for the foreseeable future, and
- there is, and will probably continue to be, a sufficiently large habitat to maintain its populations on a long-term basis.

Notes/Guidelines:

1. The targets given in these conservation objectives are based on best available information at the time of writing. As more information becomes available, targets for attributes may change. These will be updated periodically, as necessary.
2. An appropriate assessment based on these conservation objectives will remain valid even if the targets are subsequently updated, providing they were the most recent objectives available when the assessment was carried out. It is essential that the date and version are included when objectives are cited.
3. Assessments cannot consider an attribute in isolation from the others listed for that habitat or species, or for other habitats and species listed for that site. A plan or project with an apparently small impact on one attribute may have a significant impact on another.
4. Please note that the maps included in this document do not necessarily show the entire extent of the habitats and species for which the site is listed. This should be borne in mind when appropriate assessments are being carried out.
5. When using these objectives, it is essential that the relevant backing/supporting documents are consulted, particularly where instructed in the targets or notes for a particular attribute.

Qualifying Interests

**** indicates a priority habitat under the Habitats Directive***

001880	Meenaguse Scragh SAC
4010	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*

Please note that this SAC is adjacent to Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve) SAC (000165) and Lough Nillan Bog SPA (004110). See map 2. The conservation objectives for this site should be used in conjunction with those for the adjacent sites as appropriate.

Supporting documents, relevant reports & publications

Supporting documents, NPWS reports and publications are available for download from: www.npws.ie/Publications

NPWS Documents

Year :	1998
Title :	A Survey of Protected, Threatened and Scarce Plant Species in County Donegal
Author :	Conaghan, J.
Series :	Unpublished report to NPWS
Year :	2005
Title :	Conservation Plan for 2005-2010. Meenaguse Scragh cSAC Site Code 001880 Co. Donegal
Author :	NPWS
Series :	Conservation Plan
Year :	2009
Title :	Irish Red List No. 1 - Water beetles
Author :	Foster, G.N.; Nelson, B.H.; O Connor, Á.
Series :	Ireland Red List Series, NPWS
Year :	2009
Title :	Ireland Red List No. 2: Non-marine molluscs
Author :	Byrne, A.; Moorkens, E.A.; Anderson, R.; Killeen, I.J.; Regan, E.C.
Series :	Ireland Red List series, NPWS
Year :	2010
Title :	Ireland Red List No. 4: Butterflies
Author :	Regan, E.C.; Nelson, B.; Aldwell, B.; Bertrand, C.; Bond, K.; Harding, J.; Nash, D.; Nixon, D.; Wilson, C.J.
Series :	Ireland Red List series, NPWS
Year :	2012
Title :	Ireland Red List No. 8: Bryophytes
Author :	Lockhart, N.; Hodgetts, N.; Holyoak, D.
Series :	Ireland Red List series, NPWS
Year :	2013
Title :	The status of EU protected habitats and species in Ireland. Volume 2. Habitats assessments
Author :	NPWS
Series :	Conservation assessments
Year :	2014
Title :	Guidelines for a national survey and conservation assessment of upland vegetation and habitats in Ireland, Version 2.0
Author :	Perrin, P.M.; Barron, S.J.; Roche, J.R.; O'Hanrahan, B.
Series :	Irish Wildlife Manuals, No. 79
Year :	2016
Title :	Ireland Red List No. 10: Vascular Plants
Author :	Wyse Jackson, M.; FitzPatrick, Ú.; Cole, E.; Jebb, M.; McFerran, D.; Sheehy Skeffington, M.; Wright, M.
Series :	Ireland Red List Series, NPWS

Other References

Year :	2009
Title :	Common Standards Monitoring guidance for upland habitats
Author :	JNCC
Series :	Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough
Year :	2012
Title :	Rare and threatened bryophytes of Ireland
Author :	Lockhart, N.; Hodgetts, N.; Holyoak, D.
Series :	National Museums Northern Ireland
Year :	2013
Title :	Interpretation manual of European Union habitats- Eur 28
Author :	European Commission- DG Environment
Series :	European Commission
Year :	2017
Title :	Irish Vegetation Classification: Technical Progress Report No. 3
Author :	Perrin, P.
Series :	Report submitted to National Biodiversity Data Centre

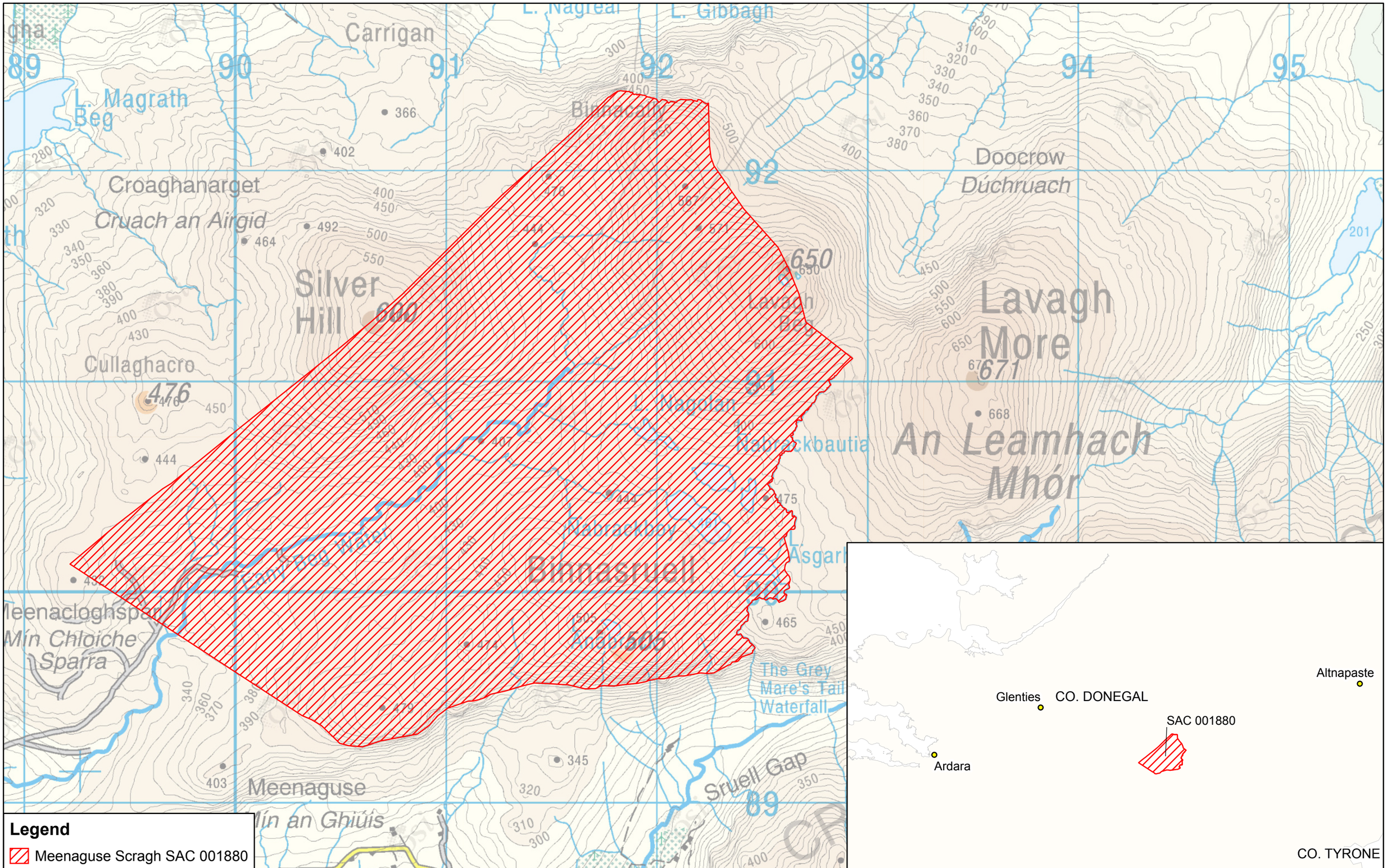
4010 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*

To maintain the favourable conservation condition of Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* in Meenaguse Scragh SAC, which is defined by the following list of attributes and targets:

Attribute	Measure	Target	Notes
Habitat area	Hectares	Area stable or increasing, subject to natural processes	Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* has not been mapped in detail for Meenaguse Scragh SAC and thus the total current area of the qualifying habitat in the SAC is unknown. The habitat occurs in mosaic with blanket bog vegetation on the lower slopes of Silver Hill, Binnacally, Binnasruell and Lavagh Bog surrounding Lough Anarget, which is overgrown by an extensive floating mat of bog mosses (scragh), in the valley bottom. The habitat also occurs in association with upland acidic grassland and exposed rock and flush vegetation (NPWS, 2005; NPWS internal files)
Habitat distribution	Occurrence	No decline, subject to natural processes	See the notes on Habitat area above
Ecosystem function: soil nutrients	Soil pH and appropriate nutrient levels at a representative number of monitoring stops	Maintain soil nutrient status within natural range	Relevant nutrients and their natural ranges are yet to be defined. However, nitrogen deposition is noted as being relevant to this habitat (NPWS, 2013)
Community diversity	Abundance of variety of vegetation communities	Maintain variety of vegetation communities, subject to natural processes	The entire diversity of wet heath vegetation communities within this SAC is unknown. Information on vegetation communities associated with this habitat in the uplands is presented in Perrin et al. (2014). See also the Irish Vegetation Classification (Perrin, 2017; www.biodiversityireland.ie/projects/national-vegetation-database/irish-vegetation-classification)
Vegetation composition: cross-leaved heath	Occurrence within 20m of a representative number of monitoring stops	Cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) present within a 20m radius of each monitoring stop	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). Cross-leaved heath is the only characteristic species of the habitat listed in European Commission (2013). Whilst it is seldom abundant in wet heaths, its presence at high frequencies is considered one of the few characteristics common between the varied communities of this habitat (JNCC, 2009)
Vegetation composition: positive indicator species	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of positive indicator species at least 50%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014), where the list of positive indicator species for this habitat is also presented. Positive indicator species recorded in the habitat in the SAC include ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), bog asphodel (*Narthecium ossifragum*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) (NPWS internal files)
Vegetation composition: lichens and bryophytes	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Total cover of *Cladonia* and *Sphagnum* species, *Racomitrium lanuginosum* and pleurocarpous mosses at least 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). A plentiful lichen/bryophyte layer is characteristic of this habitat. In this SAC, bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) and frequent hummocks of *Racomitrium lanuginosum* have been recorded as a feature of the habitat (NPWS internal files)
Vegetation composition: ericoid species and crowberry	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of ericoid species and crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) at least 15%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). A dwarf shrub layer with ericoid species is characteristic of this habitat (crowberry is only rarely present). Low cover of these species would be indicative of chronic overgrazing, burning, etc. In this SAC, ling (*Calluna vulgaris*) and cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) occur, and crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) has been recorded as occurring in small quantities in the habitat (NPWS internal files)

Vegetation composition: dwarf shrub species	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of dwarf shrubs less than 75%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). A dwarf shrub layer is characteristic of wet heaths, but the vegetation should be a mixture of dwarf shrub and graminoid species with higher cover of dwarf shrubs being potentially indicative of drainage
Vegetation composition: negative indicator species	Percentage cover at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Total cover of negative indicator species less than 1%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014), where the list of negative indicator species for this habitat is also presented
Vegetation composition: non-native species	Percentage cover at, and in local vicinity of, a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of non-native species less than 1%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). Non-native species can be invasive and have deleterious effects on native vegetation. A low target is set as non-native species can spread rapidly and are most easily dealt with when still at lower abundances
Vegetation composition: native trees and shrubs	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of scattered native trees and shrubs less than 20%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). High cover of native trees and shrubs would indicate that the habitat may be succeeding towards scrub or woodland due to lack of grazing or due to the habitat drying out
Vegetation composition: bracken	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) less than 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). High cover of bracken would indicate that the habitat may be succeeding towards a dense bracken community
Vegetation composition: soft rush	Percentage cover in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Cover of soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) less than 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). High cover of soft rush would suggest undesirable hydrological conditions. Note, however, that poor flushes dominated by soft rush can naturally occur in mosaic with this habitat. Discrete areas of this separate habitat should not be considered here
Vegetation structure: *Sphagnum* condition	Condition at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Less than 10% of the *Sphagnum* cover is crushed, broken and/or pulled up	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). High levels of disturbed *Sphagnum* would indicate undesirable levels of grazers
Vegetation structure: signs of browsing	Percentage of shoots browsed at a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Less than 33% collectively of the last complete growing season's shoots of ericoids, crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) and bog-myrtle (*Myrica gale*) showing signs of browsing	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). In this SAC, overgrazing has been reported in localised areas of the habitat (NPWS, 2005; NPWS internal files). However, overall grazing damage to the habitat appears to have been low as indicated by the presence of cowberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), as this species cannot tolerate heavy grazing pressure
Vegetation structure: burning	Occurrence in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	No signs of burning in sensitive areas, into the moss, liverwort or lichen layer or exposure of peat surface due to burning	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014), where the list of sensitive areas for this habitat is also presented
Physical structure: disturbed bare ground	Percentage cover at, and in local vicinity of, a representative number of 2m x 2m monitoring stops	Cover of disturbed bare ground less than 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). Disturbance can include hoof marks, wallows, human footprints and vehicle and machinery tracks. Excessive disturbance can result in loss of characteristic species and presage erosion for heaths and peatlands. In this SAC, overgrazing has been reported as causing some localised erosion on the slopes of Silver Hill and the western slopes of Binnasruell (NPWS, 2005; NPWS internal files)
Physical structure: drainage	Percentage area in local vicinity of a representative number of monitoring stops	Area showing signs of drainage from heavy trampling, tracking or ditches less than 10%	Attribute and target based on Perrin et al. (2014). Drainage can result in loss of characteristic species and transition to drier habitats

Indicators of local distinctiveness	Occurrence and population size	No decline in distribution or population sizes of rare, threatened or scarce species associated with the habitat and no decline in status of hepatic mats associated with this habitat	This includes species on the Flora (Protection) Order, 2015 and/or Red Lists (Byrne et al., 2009; Regan et al., 2010; Lockhart et al., 2012; Wyse Jackson et al., 2016, etc.). The Annex V and Near Threatened species mountain clubmoss (*Diphasiastrum alpinum*) and stag's-horn clubmoss (*Lycopodium clavatum*) (Wyse Jackson et al., 2016) have been recorded in the SAC (Conaghan, 1998), but cannot be specifically assigned to this habitat. A number of Red Listed and Near Threatened bryophytes (see Lockhart et al., 2012) and water beetles (Foster et al., 2009) have also been recorded in the SAC, but cannot be specifically assigned to this habitat



Legend

Meenaguse Scragh SAC 001880

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MAP 1:
MEENAGUSE SCRAGH SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
SAC DESIGNATION

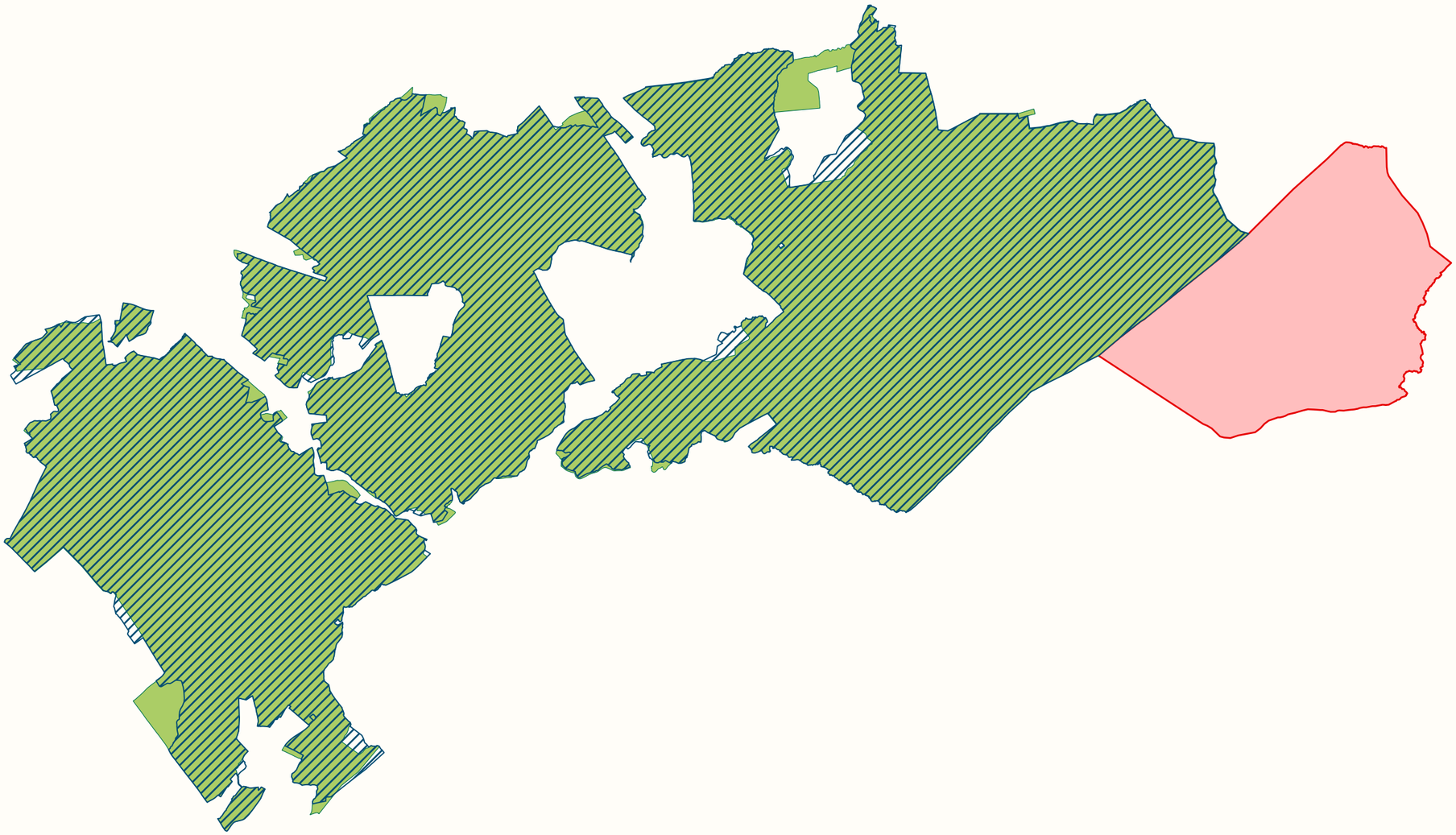
Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document.

SITE CODE:
SAC 001880; version 3.0. CO. DONEGAL

0 210 420 630 840 Meters

N

Map Version 1
Date: Feb 2019



Legend

- Meenaguse Scragh SAC 001880
- Lough Nillan Bog (Carrickatlieve) SAC 000165
- Lough Nillan Bog SPA 004110
- OSi Discovery Series County Boundary

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MAP 2:
MEENAGUSE SCRAGH SAC
CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
ADJACENT, ADJOINING AND OVERLAPPING DESIGNATIONS

Map to be read in conjunction with the NPWS Conservation Objectives Document.

SITE CODE:
SAC 001880; version 3.0. SAC 000165; version 3.0., SPA 004110; version 3.0. CO. DONEGAL

0 0.5 1 1.5 2 2.5 Kilometers

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Map Version 1
Date: Feb 2019