



“Restoration of the Lower Shannon SAC (Mulkear River) for Sea Lamprey, Atlantic Salmon and the European Otter”

Press Release

31st January 2014

January Ends as January Began With the Mulkear In Flood

The month was marked by extremely unsettled and wet weather. The month began where December 2013 left off with flood events recoded on the 4th and 6th of January, followed by similar flood events on the 12th and 15th of the month. The most significant flood event of the month, and indeed the most severe flood event thus far this winter, occurred on the 24th and 25th January. This resulted in the cancellation of a planned Mulkear Conservation Volunteer outing in the Upper Mulkear. The month closed out with similar, but less severe, flood events on the 26th and 28th of the month. The Mulkear River, and the wider catchment, was therefore in near flood for almost the entire month.



Elevated water levels on the Mulkear, 6th Jan 2014 (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

Winter flood events, like those in the Mulkear, are an entirely natural phenomenon and are an important element of healthy river ecosystem. Unfortunately flooding, as many inland and coastal communities throughout Ireland have experienced, cannot be entirely prevented. They can have an extremely negative impact on the general public, on property and the environment. They can severely impact on peoples livelihoods, as witnessed in the summer flooding of 2012 and the negative impact on the farming community throughout the Mulkear catchment.



Elevated water levels and debris on the Clare River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

No breaches of the flood defences on the Mulkear were recorded this winter. Rivers and river banks have been carefully monitored. Thankfully one MulkearLIFE's key project partner, the Office of Public Works managed to remove all the trees and debris which had accumulated at Annacotty on the Lower Mulkear. Several very large trees and long branches had fallen during the storms over the Christmas / New Year period. They were carried downstream by the sheer force of flood waters and had lodged at Annacotty Bridge.

Both the OPW and MulkearLIFE had been monitoring water levels since the early part of the month to see when, and if, it would be safe to remove the trees. The OPW availed of a very short weather window yesterday (30th January 2014) where favourable weather and declining water levels allowed them to fully remove all the trees which had accumulated across Annacotty Bridge. The fear was that the poor weather, predicated for today and over the weekend, and indeed into next week, would result in further accumulation of trees and debris across Annacotty Bridge, which might increase the risk of flooding from potential blockages.



Elevated water levels on the Mulkear, 28th Jan 2014 (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

While the medium term 5-day forecast does not look very favourable, MulkearLIFE looks forward to the weather settling down and for water levels in the Mulkear Catchment returning to more normal winter flow levels. This will greatly assist the project to begin to assess the extent of the impact of six weeks of near constant flooding.



Trees, branches and debris, largely hidden below water, 28th Jan 2014 (Image: RÓC)

Notes for Editors

1. High Resolution Digital Images are available to accompany this Press Release.
2. Interviews can be arranged with the Project Manager by using the contact details below.
3. MulkearLIFE is a new €1.75 million European Commission funded LIFE Nature project working on the restoration of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (with a focus on the Mulkear River catchment) for Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter. Further details may be viewed on the project website www.mulkearlifeproject.com
4. Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick) is lead partner together with the OPW and Limerick County Council. Additional funding support comes from National Parks and Wildlife Service. Other supporters include Teagasc, IFA, ICMSA, and local angling groups.
5. The project is one of the first and most important integrated catchment management projects in Ireland. It is a flagship EU LIFE Nature project –covering some 650 sq km which contain a variety of habitats and protected species. Much of the area is designated as a Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) under the EU Habitats Directive and forms part of the Natura 2000 Network.

Issued by:

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