



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

Press Release

12th May 2014

Celebrate World Fish Migration Day – Sat. 24th May 2014

World Fish Migration Day 2014 (WFMD), which takes place on Saturday, 24th May 2014, is a one day global initiative, with local events worldwide, to create awareness of the importance of open rivers and migratory fish. WFMD is held to improve the public's understanding of the importance of open rivers and migratory fish and their needs. The ability of fish to freely migrate is crucial to achieve healthy fish stocks. While most fish are migratory to some degree, some species like those found in the Lower Shannon, Atlantic salmon, trout, sea lamprey and eel can migrate thousands of kilometers to complete their life cycles. If they can't migrate, the population will die out. This has happened with many species in different places around the world already.



Atlantic Salmon jumping Annacotty weir, January 2011 (Image: Lette Moloney)

On a global scale, millions of people in various regions of the world, like in the Mekong river basin, rely on migratory fish as a food source. A collapsing fish stock has a devastating effect on the life of local people. With the great many man-made barriers in the rivers and on the coast it is very hard for migratory fish to reproduce. In the current situation, migratory fish are threatened and fish stocks are declining rapidly around the world. They are particularly threatened by barriers such as weirs, dams and sluices, built for water management, hydropower and land drainage.



Crowds gather for massive salmon run, Januray 2011 (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

In an Irish context, MulkearLIFE / Inland Fisheries Ireland will host two free public events to highlight the importance of fish migration on the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation with a particular focus on the Mulkear River Catchment. To mark World Fish Migration Day, the events will highlight the importance of Atlantic Salmon and Sea Lamprey migration. The events will be focused on the first man-made barrier to the upward migration of Atlantic Salmon and Sea Lamprey on the Mulkear River, namely Annacotty weir. The Mulkear River, and the wider catchment, forms part of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation and is the focus of the EU LIFE funded, MulkearLIFE project.

During the first event on Saturday 24th May 2014 it is hoped that a live demonstration of Sea Lamprey successfully ascending MulkearLIFE's specifically designed passes on Annacotty weir will take place. This very early morning event, which is dependent on river conditions and the presence of sea lamprey in the system, will kick off at 06.00hrs and end at 08.00hrs. The meeting point is the car park area of the Mill Bar, Annacotty, Co. Limerick.



Sea lamprey spawning, Mulkear River, June 2014 (Image: Glen Wightman)

The second event on the day will commence at 12 mid-day and once more the meeting point will be the car park area of the Mill Bar, Annacotty, Co. Limerick. The mid-day event will have a particular emphasis on children and helping them to enhance their understanding of the importance of fish migration and healthy river ecosystems. The event will highlight the work of MulkearLIFE /IFI and our project partners over the past five years. It will include an overview of MulkearLIFE's work to improve sea lamprey access at barriers on the Lower Mulkear River and open up fish passage to over 180km of additional habitat.

Come join the fun on World Fish Migration Day - Sat 24 May 2014

The event to mark World Fish Migration Day at Annacotty will include family fun, face painting and various prizes will be awarded for the best fish costumes. The event will include live fish demonstrations of the various life stages of the Atlantic Salmon, a discussion of healthy river ecosystems and an excursion to Ballyclogh weir on the Lower Mulkear River where the weir was been partially removed in 2013 to improve Atlantic Salmon and Sea Lamprey migration. Both events are free and open to the public. All are welcome.



Sucking disc of adult sea lamprey plays a key role (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

It is expected that these events, which are being organised locally under the umbrella of WFMD, will help create awareness about open rivers and free fish migration routes. The event on the Mulkear River is but one of almost 250 events around the world on WFMD; starting in New Zealand, following the sun and ending as the sun sets on Hawaii. The WFMD will bring global attention for the need for open rivers and free routes for fish migration. It will deliver international press coverage and new fish migration awareness initiatives. The global event will be summarized in a visual presentation with the number of locations, number of participants, photo's, films, etc, presented to politicians and high-level officers of the European Parliament and to others.

For further information email ruairi.oconchuir@fisheriesireland.ie or telephone 061 300 238 / 087 062 5582

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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