



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

## Press Release

26<sup>th</sup> January 2015

### MulkearLIFE Wins LAMA Community & Council Award

MulkearLIFE was delighted to win a Local Authorities Members Association (LAMA) Award on Saturday night last. The LAMA Community & Council Awards 2015, held in association with IPB Insurance, took place in Dublin on Saturday, 24th January. The awards recognise and celebrate community and councils together and provide an opportunity to highlight and celebrate work undertaken within local communities.



Patsy Egan, one of many local farmers involved in MulkearLIFE (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

MulkearLIFE was nominated by Cllr. Elena Secas (Limerick City & County Council) and won the award in the category ‘Most Significant Contribution to Water Quality’ which was sponsored by EireWater. MulkearLIFE’s work in this regard has focused on working with local landowners to improve water quality in the Mulkear catchment. This work has helped build a partnership based approach to examine practical cost effective ways by which river water quality on farms can be improved.



Award for 'Most Significant Contribution to Water Quality' (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

The work was undertaken on a 'pilot farm' basis and was designed to be a learning process for all involved: local farmers, farm planners and the staff of Inland Fisheries Ireland and Teagasc. Participation in the programme of work was entirely voluntary. The 'pilot farms' worked to promote good water stewardship within the wider Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation through the development of sustainable water solutions where farmers are relying on direct access or cattle drinks for watering their cattle.



Tom Butler and Patrick Hourigan on farm demo, Dead River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)



Amongst the measures implemented, fencing, installation of pasture pumps and water troughs and water harvesting were very prominent. It is hoped that the work will continue to help inform policy development and the implementation of progressive agri-environmental measures on now best riparian zones can be best managed and water quality improved.



Farm Demo Day with local farmers and Teagasc planners (Image: Glen Wightman)



John Ryan inspects completed fencing work on Bilboa River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

MulkearLIFE is a European Commission LIFE+ Nature project which has worked to restore degraded habitats throughout the Mulkear Catchment. The project was represented at the ceremony by the key project partners: Inland Fisheries Ireland (Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Manager of MulkearLIFE and Ms. Amanda Mooney, Director of the Shannon River Basin District), Limerick City and County Council (Mr. John Sheehan) and the Office of Public Works (Mr. Noel Fitzpatrick).



Flan Ryan and Noel Sheehan (IFI) with local farmer John Ryan (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

MulkearLIFE is headed by Inland Fisheries Ireland who acted as coordinating beneficiary and worked with key project partners in the Office of Public Works and Limerick City and County Council. The National Parks and Wildlife acted as a significant project co-financier. A range of other stakeholders supported the project including local authorities (North & South Tipperary County Councils) as well as other state bodies (Teagasc, EPA, ESB Fisheries, Coillte,) and most especially the local community (local farmers and landowners, IFA, ICMSA, local angling associations, local schools and school children and volunteers).



Paddy O' Dwyer inspect new water trough (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)



MulkearLIFE's manager, Mr. Ruairí Ó Conchúir, noted that the success of MulkearLIFE has been highly dependent on an active catchment management partnership process and on extensive outreach work to enhance environmental awareness for those living within or near the catchment. He noted that the project has worked hard to promote the importance of the Mulkear catchment on a regional, national and international stage.



River water crowfoot (*Ranunculus fluitans* Lam.) on Newport (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

Mr. Ó Conchúir stated that a major objective has been the development of strong linkage with the farming community to promote improved water quality. This has been achieved with the support and buy-in of local farmers and farming representative bodies including the IFA and ICMSA. He noted that this LAMA is an acknowledgment of the work and hard efforts of local farmers to improve water quality throughout the Mulkear catchment over the past five years.





Richard Keays reviews fencing work the Mulkear River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

Other key objectives included general outreach work in the community including a comprehensive environmental educational programme within local schools, and actively managed practical conservation outings undertaken by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers.



Ger O' Dwyer with his cattle on the Dead River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)



Cattle use water trough away from river on Ger O' Dwyer's farm (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

First held in 2006, the LAMA Awards were created to recognise innovative local and national projects in the areas of infrastructure, community development, recreation and social impact initiatives. Councillor Mags

Murray Chairman of the LAMA Association, said: “The 2015 awards saw an increase in the community based project categories and the judges felt the standard of entries was very high.



John Sheehan, Amanda Mooney, Ruairi O Conchuir, Noel Fitzpatrick with LAMA Award

The LAMA Community & Council Awards are a great opportunity to highlight and acknowledge excellent projects and initiatives at local, county and national level. Congratulations to all the nominees and winners.”

MulkearLIFE / Inland Fisheries Ireland and our main project partners in Limerick City and County Council and the Office of Public Works would like to sincerely thank the LAMA executive, the judging panel and Cllr. Elena Secas for the award for nominating the project.





Mr. Patsy Egan on the Mulkear River (Image: Ruairí Ó Conchúir)

For more information on MulkearLIFE's work with the local farming community to improve water quality please see the following YouTube Clip from the project's DVD:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g3DaIQ2a10s>

#### 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](http://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.

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