



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

Press Release

1st July 2010

The Establishment of Inland Fisheries Ireland

Minister for Natural Resources Conor Lenihan heralded the establishment of Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) today as an “historic development in the way we protect, conserve and develop our nationally important inland fisheries resource”. The IFI replaces 17 bodies formerly involved in the management of the resource and is fully operational as of today.

The establishment of IFI is an important milestone in delivering a new approach in the management of the inland fisheries sector. The Minister stressed his determination as Minister to effect change where this is needed. He said “We need a structure and organisation fit for purpose in the 21st Century. IFI will build on the achievements of the past, but with the strategic focus and organisation necessary to deal with the challenges facing the sector in the future in the context of the reform of the public sector as a whole”

The replacement of the Central and seven Regional Fisheries Boards, the National Salmon Commission and the eight Fisheries Co-operative Societies with IFI is in keeping with the Government programme for the rationalisation of State bodies.

The Minister observed “By contrast with the previous situation, where there were over 150 board members overseeing the management of the sector, in establishing IFI, I have put in place a small focused nine member board, which will be better able to adopt a much needed high level approach to strategic issues. It will also provide effective and efficient stewardship of IFI.”

Minister Lenihan emphasised “There are no additional Exchequer costs associated with the establishment of IFI. On the contrary, I am eliminating multiple agencies, creating a tight focused board, and in line with the McCarthy report recommendation, IFI will be charged with delivering its tasks with an already reduced budget.”

With in excess of 70,000 km of rivers and streams and 144,480 hectares of lakes, over 400 staff are currently employed by the fisheries boards in managing and protecting this resource. The staffing needs of the new structure will be met through existing resources and, in keeping with the Government’s commitment to optimise the use of resources, there will be no increase in the overall staff numbers in the inland fisheries service.

The Minister said “From the outset IFI will have a clear focus on efficiency and value for money and an obligation to identify areas where there is potential for additional savings. This will be achieved through the better use of existing resources and opportunities to eliminate duplication by reason of the replacement of the 8 Boards previously involved in the management of our fisheries resource with a single national authority.”

The Minister stated that it would be difficult to quantify at this early juncture the anticipated savings for the establishment of the national authority at present as they will occur over time but it is expected that costs will be reduced and savings will be delivered. The budget for the sector for 2010 has already been reduced by over €2 million.

There has been a significant change in the approach in which the national fisheries resource is managed. This recognises the complex interplay of habitats and species, and ecological biodiversity and the further changes that are

expected. The establishment of IFI will enhance the State's ability to respond quickly and effectively to these challenges.

The Minister stated "I am determined that every opportunity must be availed of to effect economies and attain efficiencies from within the system to deliver further value for money against the significant Exchequer investment in this resource. That said I am also equally determined to safeguard the inland fisheries resource in the face of the very significant challenges it faces."

The Minister again expressed his appreciation for the dedication and commitment to our inland fisheries resources shown by all of those who served on the former Fisheries Boards and said he was confident that they will continue to contribute to the management and development of the sector in the future in the national interest.

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.

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