



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

Press Release

13th June 2012

3rd Year of Environmental Education Programme Completed Reaching Over 1,300 School Children

MulkearLIFE yesterday (12 June 2012) completed the third year of its Environmental Education Programme with a wonderful group of students and teachers from Kilcommon National School.

The Project's Environmental Education Programme targets primary and post primary schools within the Mulkear catchment. Today the programme has reached over 1,300 school-children and their teachers. This is something MulkearLIFE and Inland Fisheries Ireland are extremely proud of. It means that in excess of 1,300 people, mostly young local students, have now an enhanced understanding of the work of MulkearLIFE and the importance of riparian habitat and the connectivity of rivers and wildlife corridors. Student participants have also a better understanding of Ireland's fish species, invertebrates and water quality, the major threat of non-native invasive plant species and an appreciation of the seven principles of Leave No Trace. MulkearLIFE is confident that these young people will be the future guardians of the Mulkear catchment. This is therefore an extremely important investment of time and resources by MulkearLIFE, with the support of colleagues in Inland Fisheries Ireland, in the future conservation status of Ireland's rivers and biodiversity.

The Environmental Education Programme involves two engagements – a classroom presentation by MulkearLIFE and a field trip within the Mulkear Catchment. Events take place during the academic year in the hope that the field trips will take place in glorious sunshine in April, May and June. The final field trip yesterday took place in bright but showery conditions. Rain or shine, school children, their teachers and teacher assistants, in schools across Limerick and Tipperary counties have derived great enjoyment from the programme and the river based field trips in particular.

The Programme gives the schoolchildren involved a heightened sense of “environmental ownership” and recognition of the importance of the river catchment as an important natural resource. In particular, it promotes awareness of the catchment and the habitats and species in the rivers and streams. Developing this greater understanding and respect for the flora, fauna and physical habitat is of a great help to the schoolchildren and their teachers to begin to comprehend the positive and negative environmental impacts of our own daily actions.

The Programme highlights the significance of Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter in the Mulkear and the conservation issues which surround them in the catchment. The work also focuses on the wider biodiversity surrounding us all and how this can be enhanced and protected through supporting the principles of Leave No Trace.

Field trips to the river put theory into practice as the children learn about the wonderful natural heritage of the Mulkear River. This is done through real practical research; kick sampling for invertebrates, assessing water quality, electro fishing, assessing the impact of invasive weeds, habitat survey work and general fun of exploring rivers and riparian zones.

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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