



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

## Press Release

15<sup>th</sup> November 2010

### The Story of Invasive Weed Species in the Mulkear Catchment

Invasive weed species (Giant Hogweed, Himalayan Balsam and knotweed species) are problematic along the entire course of the River Mulkear and indeed throughout the entire Mulkear catchment. Considerable progress has been made in recent months by Limerick County Council (LCC) and by the Office of Public Works (OPW) in addressing the extent of the problem with targeted programmes of control and removal. These invasive plants are a major concern to MulkearLIFE as they outcompete native vegetation, leading to a loss of biodiversity, they also reduce light available for primary producers (dense knotweed canopy) and destabilise riverbanks. In addition, Giant Hogweed is a phototoxic plant and its sap can cause severe blisters when the skin is exposed to sunlight after contacting the sap.

A comprehensive programme of work was initiated in April of 2010 by the OPW and LCC using an approved chemical herbicide to treat Giant Hogweed. Due to the levels of infestation in some areas, several treatments were necessary. Spot checking by project staff revealed outstanding kill-out rates which is evidence of the hard work, skill and professionalism of the work teams of the OPW & LCC. However, several years of treatment will be required to deplete the seed reserves.

Himalayan Balsam is widespread throughout the Catchment but Himalayan Knotweed, not to be confused with Japanese Knotweed, is one of several foreign knotweeds introduced for garden purposes in the nineteenth century from the Himalayas and now established in many locations along the Newport River and is spreading rapidly. A detailed work programme was initiated using a permitted chemical spray (Round-Up Bioactive) and excellent levels of kill-off were evident. However, the plant has significant energy stores in its rhizomes and consequently several years of treatment will be needed to bring the plant under control. Work by MulkearLIFE Work will continue again in the spring of 2011 to address the problem of invasive plants. This work will be co-ordinated by MulkearLIFE's project partners OPW & LCC. Their dedication to controlling these plants is greatly appreciated.

#### 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.mulkearlifecom](http://www.mulkearlifecom)
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:**

Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Project Manager – MulkearLIFE  
Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick Office)  
Ashbourne Business Park, Dock Road, Limerick  
Tel: 061 300 238 / Fax: 061 300 308 / Mob: 087 062 5582  
E-mail: [info@mulkearlife.com](mailto:info@mulkearlife.com)  
Web: [www.mulkearlife.com](http://www.mulkearlife.com) / [www.inlandfisheries.ie](http://www.inlandfisheries.ie)

