



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

Press Release

15th November 2012

MulkearLIFE Delighted To Host International Visitors

MulkearLIFE was delighted to have the opportunity today (Thursday 29th November) to host a large contingent of international visitors to the Mulkear catchment.

The project welcomed visiting delegates from the UK, France, Portugal and Ireland to showcase the work of MulkearLIFE and the considerable achievements of the project to date. The delegates were in Limerick to attend the Atlantic Aquatic Resource Conservation (AARC) conference yesterday (Wednesday 28th November).

The field trip included visits to various sites on the lower Mulkear River. At Annacotty weir, the work of the project in addressing Atlantic Salmon and Sea Lamprey passage was discussed, as was the project's work in addressing the ongoing problem of non-native invasives plant species. The work of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers on the control of Himalayan Balsam below Annacotty weir was outlined. The use of this important HNV site as one of four sites in MulkearLIFE's Environmental Education Work with local schools was also outlined, as was the partnership which lead to MulkearLIFE commissioning the 'Mural of LIFE' to mark LIFE @ 20 celebrations in May 2012.

The fieldtrip allowed delegates to share their experiences in fisheries management work from across Europe. This experience was of particularly relevance at Ballyclough weir where the project team greatly welcomed the input of delegates. MulkearLIFE gave a detailed presentation on the project's work to address various problems at the site including the ongoing problem of poaching. The project's work to address sea lamprey passage at Ballyclough and to assist this protected species on their upstream migration to spawning beds in the upper reaches of the Mulkear catchment was outlined. The international visitors were also very interested in the project's programme of work with the local farming community and the project's work with otter.

The Atlantic Aquatic Resource Conservation (AARC) conference on Wednesday 28th November highlighted the work of 13 project partners involved in integrated collaborative water resource management throughout the European Atlantic region. The conference, held in the Strand Hotel, overlooking the Shannon River, was attended by the MulkearLIFE Team. It offered an opportunity for AARC participants to share research findings on the conservation of native fish species.

The AARC project focused primarily on migratory fish species, namely Shad, Sea Trout, European Eel, Smelt, Atlantic Salmon and Sea Lamprey. Research work on the latter two species were of particular interest to MulkearLIFE. Various delegates noted that these species have an economic, cultural and environmental value. Regrettably, their populations are in decline requiring transnational collaboration.

While many of the presentations were of considerable interest to MulkearLIFE, one presentation in particular was of direct relevance to the ongoing work of the project. Dr. Philip McGinnity, University College Cork, gave a most interesting presentation on the genetic composition of contemporary and historical populations of salmon in the Shannon. The presentation also compared the relative performance in the wild of the progeny Feale, Mulkear and Shannon wild and hatchery salmon populations. Fish from the Mulkear and data from the MulkearLIFE's electro fishing work formed part of this research work. This phase of the ARRC project will close in approximately 6 months.

The Irish partners in the AARC project are Inland Fisheries Ireland, ESB Fisheries Conservation, University College Cork and the Marine Institute.

ARRC has greatly assisted in building greater inter-agency co-operation, particularly in relation to River Shannon fisheries management. It has helped increase a shared understanding of some of the factors causing salmon population declines in the River Shannon and how these problems can be addressed using new developments from the study of restoration ecology. There are important linkages between the AARC project and MulkearLIFE in the context of the objectives of the Shannon Salmon Restoration Project. The AARC project has worked to provide an important impetus to this work by identifying the current status of salmon production in the Shannon, coordinating the activities of national authorities and scientific institutions and by applying genetic knowledge to provide a basis for the rehabilitation of salmon in the upper Shannon.

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:

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@mulkearlifeproject.com
Web: www.mulkearlifeproject.com / www.inlandfisheries.ie

