



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

Press Release

19th October 2011

MulkearLIFE Welcomes Important European Commission Visitors

MulkearLIFE together with its project partners in Inland Fisheries Ireland, Limerick County Council, the Office of Public Works and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, were delighted to welcome a delegation from the European Commission to Limerick and the Mulkear catchment this past week. The delegation included technical and financial staff from the European Commission and a member of the European Commission’s External Monitoring Team.

The main focus of the visit was to review the aims and objectives of MulkearLIFE and progress achieved to date. The visit included a review of various technical aspects of the project to restore the Lower Shannon SAC for Sea Lamprey, Atlantic Salmon and Otter. The main objective of the various site visits was to ensure that the EC visitors received a comprehensive overview and real impression of the work being undertaken by MulkearLIFE and the key role played by project partners in the delivery of the project actions.

Various site visits were included in the programme including a site visit to Annacotty Weir on the Mulkear River to review Sea Lamprey passage and the new fish pass which the project installed in late April of this year and which has proved to be highly successful. The delegation was shown work the project has undertaken at Annacotty to remove and monitor the impact of the invasive species, Himalayan Balsam. It was noted that Annacotty is High Nature Value (HNV) site, with high recreational and amenity value and a fantastically rich and mature riparian zone. MulkearLIFE’s use of the site for its Environmental Education Work with local schools and the wider community was also highlighted.

The delegation was visited Ballymackeogh Bridge on the Newport River and Clonsingle Bridge on the Clare / Annagh River. Here an overview was given on the very impressive ongoing work been carried out by the Office of Public Works on behalf of MulkearLIFE. This includes extensive instream works (strategic placement of random boulders, installation of bank protection work, a vortex weir, a rubble mat) which it was noted greatly enhance the complexity of the river and river-bank biodiversity. The extensive work that the staff of the Office of Public Works has undertaken on invasives (Giant Hogweed and various knotweeds) was also discussed. The monitoring of this work has indicated considerable kill off in the area down-stream from Clonsingle bridge on the Clare / Annagh River.

Accompanied by Mr. John Sheehan and Mr. Sean O’Malley from Limerick County Council the European visitors was also taken to review the instream work which have been undertaken this year by Limerick County Council on sites at below Brittas Bridge and below Dromkeen Bridges on the Mulkear River. It was noted that this work includes instream measures and tunnelling work. It was noted that this important work is designed to minimise conveyance of floodwater, the rubble mats in particular were built during periods of low water flow, and are now (October 2011) significantly below the normal flow levels – thereby not affecting in any shape or form on water flow.

It was noted that the instream works would be beneficial to a range of species associated with the Lower Shannon SAC. These species include the target species of MulkearLIFE namely, Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter. The work will also benefit other lamprey species (river and brook), brown trout, white-clawed crayfish (for which traps were set pre construction and removed post construction), kingfisher, heron, dipper and various aquatic invertebrates.

The visitors were also entertained by local farmer Mr. Patrick Hourigan who is farming along the Reask and Dead Rivers in the southern part of the Mulkear catchment. The delegation had an opportunity to review the SAC designated along the Dead and Reask Rivers where work is being undertaken to enhance water quality through the provision of fencing. The delegation were also joined by Mr David Thompson from the IFA, a member of the MulkearLIFE's project Advisory Group. The visitors were also afforded an opportunity to discuss MulkearLIFE's work with otter and the installation of artificial otter holts.

MulkearLIFE would like to express its sincere appreciation to our EC visitors and to the various project partners who supported and hosted site visits. From Inland Fisheries Ireland, the Project Team would like to express its thanks to Ms. Amanda Mooney and Ms. Patricia Ryan (IFI – Shannon River Basin District, Limerick), Ms. Suzanne Campion (Head of Business Development – IFI). The project is also deeply appreciative to Mr. John Sheehan and Mr. Sean O'Malley from Limerick County Council, Mr. Noel Fitzpatrick from the Office of Public Works and Mr. Stefan Jones from the National Parks and Wildlife Services. Finally, the Project Team wish to sincerely thank Mr. Patrick Hourigan and Mr. David Thompson for giving so generously of their time in hosting our European visitors.

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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