



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

Press Release

21st December 2010

Christmas & New Year Greetings

As the end of the year draws near MulkearLIFE would like to wish you all a very joyful and peaceful Christmas and a very happy New Year in 2011.

MulkearLIFE has achieved a great deal in 2010 and we would really like to thank you all most sincerely for your support, practical help and encouragement during the year. We really appreciate this support which has helped us achieve so much this year. The new €1.75 million European Commission funded LIFE Nature project, MulkearLIFE, was officially launched in Murroe, Co. Limerick in May 2010. The project is working on the restoration of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Mulkear River catchment) for Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter. Inland Fisheries Ireland (formerly the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board) is the coordinating project partner together with the OPW and Limerick County Council. Additional funding support comes from NPWS and Tipperary County Councils. Other supporters include Coillte, ESB, Department of Agriculture, Teagasc, IFA and ICMSA. MulkearLIFE is one of the first and most important integrated catchment management projects in Ireland.

Significant progress has been achieved on a range of project actions in 2010. Most significantly, considerable progress has been made in enhancing the populations of Atlantic salmon and Sea lamprey through in-stream rehabilitation work. Work by the OPW on the Newport River has included instream work (installation of a vortex weir, rubble mats, random boulders), bank protection and bank stabilisation work above and below Ballymackeogh Bridge. The total area covered is approximately 1.5km. Considerable progress has also been achieved in addressing obstacles to the annual adult sea lamprey river upstream migration for spawning and recruitment. An extensive monitoring programme via radio tagging of Sea Lamprey began in mid May 2010 to determine habitat use and how obstacles are approached. The data from 50 tagged Sea Lamprey is now informing the modification and reengineering works which will take place in early 2011 on the Annacotty and Ballyclough weirs.

Much of the early Spring and Summer was spent addressing and reversing the damage caused by invasive exotics (Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam). Excellent progress has been achieved by Limerick County Council and the Office of Public Works in controlling invasives, primarily Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed with significant areas covered on the Dead, Mulkear, Annagh, Killeengarrif and Newport Rivers. In most cases this included an initial site treatment and multiple retreatments. The total area covered in 2010 was approximately 30km.

Catchment wide otter survey work took place in June and July supported by NPWS staff at a local and national level. This information is helping inform the project approach to improve breeding, resting habitat and food supply for otters within the Mulkear catchment. The project staff and project partners have also been extremely busy consulting interested parties and undertaking preparatory work for addressing local water quality concerns and working with farmers and farming representative bodies on alternative solutions to cattle drinks.

Perhaps the greatest level of work enjoyment the MulkearLIFE project staff derived in 2010 was through a range of events at a local and wider community level including illustrated talks, workshops, primary and post primary school

visits, presentations and school field trips. In the local schools visits alone MulkearLIFE engaged with upwards of 760 school children and their teachers in 2010.

These children are the future careers of the environment and together with the fantastic work being undertaken by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers, which Minister John Gormley TD formally launched in late 2010, offer an extremely bright future for the Mulkear and its wider catchment.

To get in touch with MulkearLIFE please use any of the following means:

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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.mulkearlifec.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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