



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

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## Press Release

21<sup>st</sup> May 2010

### **560 School Children Benefit from MulkearLIFE Environmental Education Programme**

The final school field trip of MulkearLIFE's Environmental Education Programme, in the 2009 / 2010 academic year, was completed in glorious sunshine on Thursday 20th May 2010. As part of this Environmental Education Programme 20 local schools (15 primary and 5 post-primary) were visited from January to March 2010. Illustrated presentations, a quiz game and prize giving formed part of the classroom engagement. However it was the half day field trips which proved to be the highlight for most schools. The field trips to 4 different designated site on the Mulkear, Newport, Bilboa or Dead rivers were conducted in April and May 2010. All but 1 or 2 were conducted in near perfect sunny weather.

Using a range of works sheets, bug dials, nets, electro-fishing equipment, work sheets and identification kits the field trips examined many of the aspects discussed in the classroom engagement. The field trips were designed to be a student led voyage of discovery where the staff of MulkearLIFE and the Shannon Fisheries Board played a facilitating role. The field trips focused on the work of MulkearLIFE and through group work explored the major themes of river restoration work, removal of alien invaders, general river / river bank biodiversity, indicators of otter life along the river, life cycles of Atlantic salmon and sea lamprey, other fish species and invertebrates and water quality indicators. An upstream river walk also formed part of the field trip to discuss how we can enjoy the river and the wider catchment while lessening our impact by following the seven steps of Leave No Trace.

The field trips were an over-whelming success with great thanks due to the staff of the various schools, their preparation work and most importantly the fantastic young researchers at both primary and secondary level. The support of the fisheries staff of the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board is also gratefully acknowledged. Given the sheer numbers of school children involved, the field trips would not have happened, without the help of the Fisheries Officers of the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board.

In total 20 schools took part in the MulkearLIFE Schools Environmental Education Programme with some 560 students and teachers benefiting from the experience. The programme is due to kick off again for the 2010 / 2011 academic year in September 2010 when an additional batch of schools within the Mulkear catchment will be included. If you wish for your school to be included please get in touch with MulkearLIFE as soon as possible.

## 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](http://www.mulkearlifeproject.com)
4. Shannon Regional Fisheries Board 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

Shannon Regional Fisheries Board

Ashbourne Business Park, Dock Road, Limerick

Tel: 061 300 238 / Fax: 061 300 308 / Mob: 087 062 5582

E-mail: [info@mulkearlifeproject.com](mailto:info@mulkearlifeproject.com)

Web: [www.mulkearlifeproject.com](http://www.mulkearlifeproject.com) / [www.shannon-fishery-board.ie](http://www.shannon-fishery-board.ie)

