



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

Press Release

22nd October 2010

First Catchment Based ‘Conservation Volunteers’ launched in the lower Shannon - Mulkear River Catchment

The Minister of the Environment, John Gormley TD, officially launched the ‘Mulkear Conservation Volunteers’ in Annacotty, Co. Limerick today (Friday, 22nd October 2010). The Mulkear Conservation Volunteers is the first ever volunteer corps established on a river catchment basis anywhere in Ireland. The group is a locally based corps of volunteers whose work is directly associated with EU co-funded MulkearLIFE project. MulkearLIFE (www.mulkearlifecom.com) is working on the restoration of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Mulkear River catchment) for three protected species Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and Otter. The project is led by Inland Fisheries Ireland working together with the Office of Public Works and Limerick County Council with significant funding support coming from the National Park & Wildlife Service. MulkearLIFE is one of the most important integrated catchment management projects in Ireland. The work of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers will greatly strengthen the delivery of concrete conservation actions over the next four years.

The Minister of the Environment, John Gormley TD, congratulated the local volunteers for giving so generously of their time and effort to help enhance biodiversity and protect important habitats in the Mulkear catchment, which he noted forms part of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation. He stressed, his Department was delighted to be associated with MulkearLIFE and stated “the National Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to work closely with MulkearLIFE and will support a range of project actions including work to protect otters within the Mulkear catchment. The National Parks and Wildlife Service has committed €160,000 to MulkearLIFE over the next four years. Staff from the NPWS also work directly with the project”.

At today’s launch Ruairí Ó Conchúir, MulkearLIFE Project Manager said, “This is a flagship European Commission LIFE Nature project and the role that the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers will play in supporting the project in areas like the removal of the invasive plant Himalayan Balsam along the river bank will be of significant importance”. He added, “the project area covers some 650 sq km with a variety of habitats and protected species with much of the area designated as a SAC under the EU Habitats Directive. The work of the Conservation Volunteers will help strengthen the reach and scope of the project and help it link into local conservation efforts within the catchment”.

Congratulating the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers, Sean Ryan, Director of the Shannon River Basin District of Inland Fisheries said, “One of the major challenges impacting on local biodiversity is the danger posed by invasive plant species (Giant Hogweed, Japanese knotweed and Himalayan Balsam) and the consequent loss of habitat. The concrete, practical and cost effective actions being undertaken by MulkearLIFE and its project partners will help enhance and restore the Mulkear catchment. The project has the potential to be a blueprint for other such projects throughout Ireland and Europe. The support role now being played by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers will greatly help enhance this work”.

The Main Objectives of the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers:

- Helping to enhance biodiversity through volunteer participation in practical conservation activities linked to MulkearLIFE's work programme
- Assisting in the conservation efforts of local community groups – maintaining the natural environment of the Mulkear Catchment
- Promoting the development of environmental skills of volunteers through training & practical conservation activities
- Promoting greater level of awareness of the biodiversity around us through practical conservation activities, talks, workshops, etc

Mulkear Conservation Volunteers – Proposed Work Areas for 2010 / 2011:

- Work will take place with the Mulkear catchment – covering counties Limerick & Tipperary
- Removal of invasives plants – e.g. Himalayan Balsam
- Linking into the conservation efforts of others and joining forces with other local groups
- Path Clearance / Scrub Clearance
- Assisting in survey otter work / holt construction
- Assisting with field trips (Heritage Week events)
- Organising talks, workshops, training, etc
- Giving Illustrated Talks

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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