



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

Press Release

24th April 2012

2012 School Field Trips Get Under Way

MulkearLIFE’s work in local primary and secondary schools entered an exciting phase on Friday of last week when the first two primary schools undertook river based field trips as part of the project’s Environmental Education programme. These were the project’s first field trips for 2012.

The school field trips continued on Monday of this week with two additional schools and will continue this week and over the next three to four weeks. The field trips mark the culmination of the project’s Environmental Education programme, with the earlier classroom engagements simply whetting the appetite of students and teachers alike to get down to the river and see what’s going on.

The first set of field trips utilised the Bilboa Bridge site on the Bilboa River for the children’s survey work and the area upstream from the bridge for other work. In showery but sunny weather, children from the four schools (Cappawhite, Annacarty, Garrydoolis and Oola national schools) learnt about the significance of Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and European Otter populations in the Mulkear and the conservation work underway in the catchment to help enhance their populations. The students also learnt about the wider biodiversity surrounding us all and how this can be enhanced and protected through supporting the principles of Leave No Trace in all our outdoor recreational activities.

Field trips on the river put theory into practice as the children learn about the wonderful natural heritage of the Mulkear catchment. This is done through real practical research; kick sampling for invertebrates, assessing water quality, electro fishing, assessing the impact of invasive weeds, habitat survey work and having real fun exploring rivers and riparian zones.

The Programme gives the school children involved a heightened sense of “environmental ownership” and recognition of the importance of the river catchment as an important natural resource. In particular, it promotes awareness of the catchment and the habitats and species in the rivers and streams. Developing this greater understanding and respect for the flora, fauna and physical habitat is of a great help to the school children and their teachers to begin to comprehend the positive and negative environmental impacts of our own daily actions.

To date MulkearLIFE’s Environmental Education programme has reached over 1,000 school-children and their teachers. This is something MulkearLIFE / Inland Fisheries Ireland is extremely proud of. It means that an enhanced understanding of the importance of riparian or riverbank habitats and wildlife corridors, of Ireland’s fish species, of invertebrates and water quality and an awareness of the seven principles of Leave No Trace has been achieved by over 1,000 school children. The project is confident that these young people will be the future guardians of the Mulkear catchment. This is therefore an extremely important investment of time and resources by MulkearLIFE, with the support of colleagues in Inland Fisheries Ireland, in the future conservation status of Ireland’s rivers and biodiversity.

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.mulkearlife.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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