



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

Press Release

29th May 2013

MulkearLIFE host Teagasc advisors on field trip

MulkearLIFE was delighted to be in a position to host a large group of Teagasc advisors and planners as part of a two day training workshop organised jointly by Teagasc and Inland Fisheries Ireland.

Before the field trip got underway MulkearLIFE have an overview of key work areas of the project which are not directly related to its work with farmers but which is highly dependent upon the goodwill of local farmers and landowners. This includes all of the project instream works to improve instream and riparian habitat for Atlantic salmon and other fish species. The presentation then went on to review MulkearLIFE's work with local farmers and profiles the farms to be visited yesterday afternoon. Finally the brief presentation discussed the key issues emerging in upland catchments. Examining the upper Mulkear Catchment as a case study the potential impact on water quality of land abandonment, increased forestry plantations and upland windfarms was discussed.

But the highlight of the day, despite the extremely heavy rain showers, were the field trips to view the work taking place under the LIFE project at three farmers on the Dead and Bilbao rivers. Mr. Patrick Hourigan and Mr. Tomas Butler, landowners with extensive river frontage on the Dead, Reasc and Cahernahillia rivers welcomed their visitors on the first stop of the field trip to the Dead River.

The landowners outlined the nature of their respective farm operations and the drainage history of the area. In addition, they outlined the nature of the support offered by MulkearLIFE over the past three years and the actual capital works undertaken on the river. Other issues discussed included the nature of invasive species in the catchment and in particular the problem of Giant Hogweed on the Dead River. It was noted by Mr. Hourigan that the problem has become increasingly problematic over the past 10 to 15 years and that the control measures by Limerick County Council through the MulkearLIFE project were helping to control the extent of the problem.

The role of river corridors, riparian zones and flood plains in terms of the provision of habitat for a species was also discussed. The use of grasslands in winter for wading birds was highlighted. Then work of MulkearLIFE in terms of the provision of an artificial otter holt on site was outlined as was the work of the project in attempting to reconnect old oxbows with the river channel and create wildlife habitats was highlighted.

The weather difficulties currently being faced by landowners was highlighted in the severe downpours at the start afternoon and as the field trip to the Dead River concluded.

The Bilbao River was the site of the second field trip and the contrast between the two sites was very apparent from the outset. The nature of the project's work with the farmer, Mr. John Ryan was outlined. It was noted that this High Nature Value farmland site was highly productive from a fisheries and wildlife perspective. The particular problem of non-native invasive (Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Pheasant Berry) was discussed in detail.

MulkearLIFE would like to thank Catherine Keena (Teagasc) and Dr. James King (IFI) for affording MulkearLIFE the opportunity to profile the work of the project with local farmers in the catchment as part of the training event. More especially, MulkearLIFE would like to most sincerely thank, Mr. Patrick Hourigan, Mr. Tomas Butler for giving so

generously of their time and expertise and for allowing us to view the work undertaken on the Dead River. The project would also like to thank Mr. John Ryan for allowing us to access his farm on the Bilboa River.

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.

Issued by:

Ruairí Ó Conchúir, Project Manager – MulkearLIFE
Inland Fisheries Ireland (Limerick Office)
Ashbourne Business Park, Dock Road, Limerick
Tel: 061 300 238 / Fax: 061 300 308 / Mob: 087 062 5582
E-mail: info@mulkearlifeproject.com
Web: www.mulkearlifeproject.com / www.inlandfisheries.ie

