



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

## Press Release

4<sup>th</sup> May 2010

### **New EU LIFE project launches in lower Shannon SAC - Mulkear River Catchment**

The launch took place today (Tuesday, 4th May 2010) of MulkearLIFE, a new €1.75 million European Commission funded LIFE Nature project working on the restoration of the Lower Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Mulkear River catchment) for Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and Otter. The project is led by the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board (soon to be amalgamated into the new Inland Fisheries Ireland) working together with the Office of Public Works and Limerick County Council and other stakeholders to implement the project over the next four years.

CEO of the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board, Eamon Cusack stated “the Board is delighted to be working with its project partners and project supporters in implementing this critically important project”. He added, “MulkearLIFE is one of the first and most important integrated catchment management projects in Ireland. The project will be of key importance in supporting stocks and protecting the habitats of Atlantic salmon, sea lamprey and otters in the Lower Shannon SAC while building on the work of the Mulkear Catchment Management Group.

The Board also welcomed the support from the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Tipperary county councils, local anglers, farming bodies (IFA & ICMSA), ESB, Coillte, Teagasc and the Department of Agriculture. Developing awareness of the catchment, its natural resource and of habitat management among the Mulkear’s many stakeholders will be greatly assisted by the wide variety of project supporters.

At today’s launch Ruairí Ó Conchúir, MulkearLIFE Project Manager said, “This is a flagship European Commission LIFE Nature project – one of only two awarded funding in Ireland in recent years. The Project Team is extremely appreciative to receive 50% of its overall funding from the European Union under the LIFE Nature programme”. 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 and forms part of the Natura 2000 Network”.

Michael Collins of the Office of Public Works expressed the OPW’s delight at being involved in the project and thanked the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board for their invitation to take part in MulkearLIFE as funding partners. He said, “This is the latest extension of OPW collaboration with the Fisheries Boards that stretches back more than 30 years and has encompassed works on almost all of the major Drainage Schemes under OPW control”. The OPW has committed to spending €305,000 on MulkearLIFE over the next four years. Staff from the OPW will also be working directly on the project.

John Sheehan of Limerick County Council said that his organisation was proud to be associated with MulkearLIFE and stated, “Limerick County Council will be carrying out a range of supporting project actions including bank protection work, in-stream rehabilitation work and a major programme of control and removal of invasive plant species targeting Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed on the Mulkear River.”

Congratulating the MulkearLIFE team on the launch of the project, Martin Territt, Director of the European Commission Representation in Ireland said, “One of the biggest problems affecting our environment is the destruction

of eco-systems by invasive species and loss of habitat. The actions being undertaken by the MulkearLIFE team, its partners and the local community should not only help to restore the natural balance in one of the Shannon's most important tributaries, but it should also become a model for restoring river catchments throughout Europe to their natural state."

#### 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.mulkearlifecom](http://www.mulkearlifecom)
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:**

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