



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

Press Release

5th August 2010

Significant Progress Achieved - August 2010

MulkearLIFE has now been in operation for just over 18 months. Inland Fisheries Ireland (formerly the Shannon Regional Fisheries Board) is lead partner together with the Office of Public Works (OPW) and Limerick County Council (LCC). Additional funding support comes from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Tipperary County Councils (North and South Riding). Other supporters include local anglers, farming bodies (IFA & ICMSA), Coillte, Department of Agriculture and Teagasc. Significant progress has been achieved in the first 18 months of MulkearLIFE and in particular over the past eight month period to August 2010.

MulkearLIFE is on track to achieve its objectives. Having undertaken a complete assessment of all project actions with the Coordinating and Associated Beneficiaries in February 2010, the Project Team is confident that the objectives and work plan remain valid and attainable. Considerable progress has been achieved on the main project aims, namely to: – Enhance populations of Atlantic salmon and Sea lamprey through in-stream rehabilitation work. – Remove obstacles to the annual adult sea lamprey upstream migration for spawning and recruitment. – Monitor sea lamprey to determine habitat use and how obstacles are approached. – Improve breeding, resting habitat and food supply for European otters – Stop and reverse the damage caused by invasive exotic plants (Giant hogweed and Japanese knotweed) and restore the natural riparian zone with a management programme to prevent re-colonisation. – Run large scale trials on removal of Himalayan balsam and non-native conifers in the riparian zone. – Address local water quality concerns by working with farmers on alternative solutions to cattle drinks. – Develop practical prescriptions for the management of a complex river system and its riparian zone, ensuring that the integrity of the Lower Shannon SAC is managed sustainably into the future. – Promote the project’s work through a range of events at a local and wider community level. – Produce management prescriptions for habitat rehabilitation for Atlantic salmon, Sea lamprey and European otters, which can be applied to SACs in other Natura 2000 sites. – Promote awareness at a local, regional and national level through media and educational events.

The Project Team is also confident that the expected results of the above objectives will result in: – Enhancement of the populations of Atlantic salmon, Sea lamprey and otters along the Mulkear River. – Greater awareness and understanding of issues affecting the SAC and how to manage same – Development of practical, costed and transferable management prescriptions for habitat rehabilitation for Atlantic salmon, Sea lamprey and European otters for other Natura 2000 sites.

Progress Achieved

From the final quarter of 2009 significant progress has been achieved. This progress has continued in 2010. One of the most important elements was to reassure various parties that MulkearLIFE was indeed proceeding and was operational on the ground. This has now been achieved through a range of project actions including the establishment of support group, through planning sessions with project partners, walkover surveys and concrete conservation activities. It has been achieved through awareness and information dissemination work, including local, national and international media work, the launch of a project website, illustrated talks and workshops, networking and exchange visits, the launch of a comprehensive school based environmental education programme and most importantly through the official launch of MulkearLIFE in early May 2010. All of this work has been aimed towards achieving active

community participation to highlight how MulkearLIFE is working to enhance the conservation status of the EU Habitats Directive Annex II species (Atlantic Salmon, Sea Lamprey and Otter) in the lower River Shannon SAC.

MulkearLIFE has now a visible presence on the ground and awareness of the project's objectives and work programme has increased significantly. The key coordinating body for this has been the Project Steering Committee (PSC), which was formally established in December 2009. The PSC is designed to ensure that a platform exists for all beneficiaries to work in a spirit of co-operation to support the delivery of the various project actions. The catchment wide Project Advisory Group (PAG) has also been of great importance to ensure buy-in to the project's work programme from a wide and varied range of project supporters. While the PAG was in existence prior to the start of MulkearLIFE it has now been formalised with clear Terms of Reference. One of the most significant developments has been the establishment of a Technical Advisory Group (TAG). The TAG supports the implementation of two key sets of project actions, namely those dealing with concrete conservation work and the overall monitoring of same. Many of the leading experts within inland fisheries and nature conservation in Ireland sit on the TAG.

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.

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