



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

Press Release

7th March 2012

The Light of Spring **Spring-time arrives throughout the Mulkear Catchment**

After a very mild winter, with all three months recording above average air temperatures, the first week of Spring has seen rain, sun and showers with air temperatures of 8°C to 10°C.

The past winter was a dull, grey, wet affair with a noticeable absence of any prolonged cold, dry, settled period. Thankfully, for the most part, it was exceptionally mild with air temperatures above normal by between 1.2°C and 2.0°C.

In the Mulkear Catchment, aside from a few days of cold in early February, the winter was extremely mild throughout the area. This resulted in exceptional levels of grass growth and general growth. Met Éirean has reported that Spring is four to five weeks ahead of schedule in most parts of Ireland. All signs of winter are rapidly fading, there is good stretch in the evenings and mornings are now bright from before seven am.

Spring is an extremely busy time for a great many throughout the Mulkear catchment. Farmers involved with MulkearLIFE are busy calving, while others in the upper catchment are busy lambing. While many cattle are still indoors, owing to super saturated land, most will be out of their winter housing within a matter of weeks.

Trees in catchment are budding new shoots and many are in the early stages of leaf. Birds (blue tits, long-tailed tits, chaffinches, wrens and robins) are busy searching for mates, food and nest materials. Along rivers and riverbanks dippers, grey wagtails and kingfishers are equally busy.

It is also an extremely busy time of planning for MulkearLIFE. A considerable body of work is planned for the year. Already the project has mapped out with project partners, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Limerick County Council, Office of Public Works and co-financing colleagues, National Parks & Wildlife Service, work that will keep us all extremely busy until the winter sets in again. This includes exciting instream works on the Mulkear and Newport Rivers which will greatly benefit Sea Lamprey and Atlantic Salmon.

It is going to be an extremely important year for the LIFE programme across Europe and MulkearLIFE has been busy planning events to mark the major milestone of the 20th Anniversary of the LIFE programme in May 2012. MulkearLIFE events include an Amateur Photo Competition which is themed ‘Exploring the Biodiversity of the Lower Shannon’. The second major event planned is entitled ‘A Mural of LIFE’. This will coincide with the 20th Anniversary of the LIFE programme on the 21st May and will mark the official launch of MulkearLIFE’s mural at Annacotty and the unveiling of site signage and related habitat work. Much work has already been completed on site this past number of weeks. The third event on the 26th May will see MulkearLIFE host a field trip entitled ‘The Magical Mulkear: A Field Trip Of Discovery’. This event promises to be a very enjoyable day out visiting a range of exciting sites, with a focus on the rich biodiversity of the Mulkear catchment. A great many other events are planned the details of which will be posted in due course.

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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