



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

Press Release

9th July 2012

Water levels drop but remain above normal summer

The 1st of July would normally mark the start of MulkearLIFE's instream works. This is the earliest date on which our project partners, Limerick County Council and the Office of Public Works, can return to undertake work, within or from the banks of rivers in the Mulkear catchment. Unfortunately, due to the phenomenal levels of rainfall experienced in June 2012, practically every river in the catchment remained in flood as June closed out and we entered the first week of July.

June 2012 was officially the wettest June on record in Ireland. All but two of Met Éireann's observational stations recorded their wettest June on record. In the Mulkear catchment, some remarkable rainfall events were noted. Some stations recorded rainfall levels of almost 300% above the average level for June. Perhaps the most exceptional aspect of the rainfall was the intensity of the rain on individual days or across two or more days.

While the area experienced several extremely warm sunny days, the average number of total hours of sunshine was below normal values throughout the Mulkear catchment. Other parts of Munster reported half the average total of hours of sunshine making it the dullest June on record at Cork Airport, with Shannon Airport reporting its dullest June in almost 20 years. As noted in other website posts, the fine weather experienced during late May broke on the 1st June with torrential flooding recorded throughout the Mulkear Catchment on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd June. This pattern continued throughout the month with significant rainfall falling on the 7th/8th, on the 16th / 17th, on the 21st and on the 27th / 28th June 2012. All these events lead to severe flooding throughout the catchment as reported on previously. To give but one example of the sheer volume of rainfall, on the 7th June, Met Éireann's observational station at Shannon Airport recorded 41.8 mm (1.65 inches) of rainfall in less than 24 hours.

The evidence of the flooding events during June 2012 is to be seen on rivers throughout the catchment. Aside from significant breaches resulting in substantial flooding, a great deal of debris has been brought down on floods. Large trees and logs, normally associated with significant winter flood events, have been brought down rivers and trapped in bridges, weirs and fish passes. The sheer scale of the floods, especially in the upper catchment, can be seen in where plastic and other materials has been deposited.

While the warm temperatures and continual rain has parts of the catchment resembling a tropical rainforest, the flooding has also impacted on vegetation and flattened large swathes of Himalayan Balsam. MulkearLIFE is monitoring this on an ongoing basis.

As we enter the second week of July 2012 water levels have dropped considerable but remain significantly above normal summer flow levels. On the main stem of the Mulkear River, the river remains in flood and the prospect of instream works going ahead before the end of the week look unfavourable.

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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