



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

Press Release

9th September 2013

MulkearLIFE's Work to be Presented at Important European Conference

MulkearLIFE's work over the past four years will this week be presented at an important European conference. The 'European Rivers Restoration Conference', which is being run jointly by European River Restoration Centre and the RESTORE LIFE+ project, is designed to celebrate successful river restoration work throughout the EU and examine new ways to address the major challenges that lie ahead.

The conference organisers note that 'rivers and the waters they contain are the life blood of the European landscape but they need protection and restoration'. Therefore, this important conference provides an opportunity for projects, like MulkearLIFE, to share and learn about the successes and challenges of river restoration and be a part of the revival of rivers in Europe.

The Conference will provide examples of practical efforts to restore the natural state and functioning of rivers, how this has improved flood risk management, river ecology, supported green infrastructure and community development. The conference will also be an ideal opportunity for an exchange of expertise – about River Restoration from expert presentations, field trips to restoration sites and workshop sessions. It provides MulkearLIFE with invaluable networking opportunities as the conference itself is an ideal platform to meet and share ideas with like-minded professionals and practitioners involved in the protection and restoration of Europe's rivers.

MulkearLIFE's work will be presented in a session dealing with 'Ensuring Local Sustainability' within river restoration work. The project's partnership based approach to integrated catchment management on the Lower Shannon SAC will be highlighted in a presentation entitled 'Community Engagement and Involvement in Catchment Restoration and Management on the Lower Shannon SAC'. Within the context of the funding support of the EU LIFE programme, the key role of project partners (Inland Fisheries Ireland, Office of Public Works and Limerick County Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service) will be outlined.

Community engagement and local community involvement, which has been of critical importance and a key factor in the success of MulkearLIFE, will be outlined and highlighted. This will include the way the work of the Project is supported through the Mulkear Catchment Management Group and the Project Advisory Group, which act as reference points for the Project and ensure that all parties involved in the catchment have an opportunity to work in a spirit of co-operation to support the delivery of MulkearLIFE's comprehensive work programme.

The presentation will also outline how the Project's river restoration work has been greatly supported by the Mulkear Conservation Volunteers. The group is a locally based corps of volunteers whose work is directly linked to that of MulkearLIFE. The presentation will outline that MulkearLIFE's catchment wide instream work has included the installation of over 25 rubble mats and the strategic placement of over 600 random boulders. The measures have greatly assisted in creating habitat complexity, enhancing the abundance of macro-invertebrates and fish. It will note that the work has broken up uniform habitat and reduced sediment input. The work has included instream measures on over 20 km of river channel, treatment of over 200 km of riparian zone for non-native invasive plant species, including the manual removal of Himalayan balsam at various High Nature Value sites.

The presentation will also outline the considerable success that has been achieved with sea lamprey, including the installation of the first ever substrate designed specifically for the easement of sea lamprey passage on weirs in Ireland. Passage has been achieved over barriers since 2011. In August 2013, a major barrier to sea lamprey passage was removed at Ballyclogh Weir on the Lower Mulkear River, opening up an additional 180km of habitat for sea lamprey. Some of the project's instream restoration techniques will be outlined including the project's work to support salmonids. It will outline how rubble mats are used to create artificial riffles and how they reduce the cross-sectional area of the river thereby increasing flow velocities. The top of the mat is quickly colonised by a range of aquatic vegetation and aquatic invertebrates. It also provides excellent habitat for young salmonids. The presentation will outline the exceptional results which have been achieved on the mats installed by MulkearLIFE in 2011. Electrofishing results in 2013 reveal that hundreds of salmon fry are utilising the rubble mats. The average density is an amazing 0.72 fry/m². In the space of two years, the average salmon parr density has tripled.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly of all, the presentation will outline the level of community engagement MulkearLIFE has undertaken in local schools and within the local community. It will be noted, that almost 2,000 schoolchildren and 70 schools have been engaged in an integrated Environmental Education Programme, including field trips, since 2010.

MulkearLIFE looks forward to the networking opportunity the European Rivers Restoration Conference presents and more especially the opportunity to outline to an international audience the wonderfully rich biodiversity and natural heritage of the Mulkear Catchment.

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
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@mulkearlif.com

Web: www.mulkearlif.com / www.inlandfisheries.ie

