



I.R.D. Duhallow Ltd.



IRD Duhallow LIFE Newsletter

Project Update (Spring 2015)



Wet and windy are two words that might best describe this time of year. Whilst most of us are huddled up in our warm homes, nature around us still carries on. Salmon and trout have just spawned and their eggs are now incubating between the riverbed gravels to hatch out as fry sometime in late Spring. Otters too are busy now and the cubs are born into the world to be nurtured by their mothers, as they too learn the ways of Mother Nature. The LIFE project is working on the ground making the best of the difficult weather conditions and concentrating on activities that can be done in this period. Much of our work is now concentrating on pruning of trees along the river banks where the growth is too dense and conversely planting of young native trees, where river stretches are too open. A healthy balance of trees along the river bank not only benefits wildlife but also helps protect farmland against river erosion and flooding.

Agri-Environment scheme

The final report on this scheme which we have been developing in partnership with the local farming community has now been completed. We had hoped to meet with the Department of Agriculture before Christmas. However developments in Europe precluded such a meeting but we are hopeful that this meeting will take place early in 2015. A huge amount of work went into the development of this scheme which aims to be both practical and effective from the farmers perspective and provide real benefits to the local environment on the River Allow. Once more we would like to thank all of the farmers and landowners who have been so supportive and taken part in the process.



River Allow Catchment Management



This initiative aims to improve river management on the Blackwater River by first concentrating on the River Allow catchment to develop a model of management that involves all of the key interest groups. The aim is to find common ground, share resources and develop and follow a road map towards a better river and water quality for everybody's benefit. The group meets on a monthly basis and during each month a focus is given on a specific topic. For example, at our last meeting in December the focus topic was "forestry" and the aim was to highlight issues affecting sustainable forestry development in the catchment. Queries that were raised at this meeting were and are being addressed on an ongoing basis and it is intended that other relevant issues will be highlighted and addressed over the coming months. If you are interested in this process and would like to get involved please contact the IRD Duhallow LIFE+ project at 029-60633. We are particularly interested in increasing our local community involvement.

EPA carry out Catchment study on the River Allow

An EPA funded study was recently carried out by expert hydrologist Katie Tedd on the River Allow catchment. The aim of the study is to draw together all existing data on the River Allow catchment to provide scientific background support for good decision making on the River Allow catchment initiative.

This information is relevant to much of Duhallow and will be of interest to most people. For example between 65% and 99% of effective rainfall (difference between total rainfall and actual evapotranspiration) ends up as surface water as the soils are poorly draining with low permeability subsoils. Therefore we must be extra cautious when spreading slurry or fertiliser in Duhallow and follow best practice by avoiding spreading in wet weather. Similarly it is important that we manage waste water treatment plants properly and clean out septic tanks as appropriate. The report found that water quality on the River Dalua was good, on the River Allow water quality was moderate and on the River Brogeen it was bad. A copy of the report is available on request by ringing the LIFE project at 029-60633.



Conferences

TRAP final conference: A presentation was given in Slovenia at the EU INTERREG IV TRAP project conference. The LIFE project outlined IRD Duhallow's rural community approach to working to improve the environment for all and the difficulties facing local communities to achieve this goal. It is important that policy makers in other European countries as well as Ireland are made aware of issues affecting people on the ground when it comes to the protection of water quality and wildlife.

Catchment Flood Risk Assessment and Management Programme (OPW flood maps)

IRD Duhallow provided assistance to the OPW during their Public consultation, on Draft Flood Maps which show the extent of flood risk in certain locations. This project known as CFRAMs is an important initiative under the EU Floods Directive and we encourage anybody who might be affected by flooding to find out more at the Flood Risk website <http://www.cfram.ie>.



Freshwater Pearl Mussels are our water quality "canary in the mine"

The Freshwater Pearl Mussel is like the "canary in the mine". In olden days, miners used to bring a canary in a cage down into the mine shaft where they were working. If the canary stopped singing and keeled over it was a sure sign for the miners to get out. You see, the canary was more sensitive to the toxic gasses which the miners couldn't smell or see. Similarly Freshwater Pearl Mussels are carrying out the same function in the River Blackwater. While the Freshwater Pearl Mussels are still alive and healthy, we know that the river is clean for farming, farm animals, fish and humans. We should be using the Freshwater Pearl Mussels as the Quality Assurance for our water and for agricultural products and tourism. President Michael D Higgins was recently in China supporting important valuable trade deals which will benefit our dairy and beef industries. It is our green image that gives us our competitive edge abroad in countries such as the USA. Recent media coverage suggesting that Freshwater Pearl Mussel is preventing progress and development on the River Blackwater is narrow minded and ultimately self defeating. In IRD Duhallow we believe that by working together and planning ahead it should be possible to not only protect our wildlife, water and our health but we should also benefit from them both in terms of economics and recreation.

Conservation works



Our crews worked hard over the last two months on the ground despite the difficult weather conditions. We were delighted to find that otters had not only taken up residence in one of the previously unused artificial otter holts placed by the LIFE project near a river bank, but it would appear that the same otter family also built an adjacent holt in a steep bank which we had planted with willow and alder trees. These trees were kindly donated by the public.

The IRD Duhallow LIFE project would to acknowledge and thank all of the landowners, supporters and volunteers for their assistance with the project to date. If you would like further information or participation as a volunteer please contact us for further details. IRD Duhallow LIFE project: Tel: 029-60633 or check us out at www.duhallowLIFE.com.



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