

Farmers Attitudes to RBPS



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'The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development: Europe
investing in rural areas'.



Result based payments

- Whole new approach for farmers
- A lot of resources and time needed on education
- Give farmers time to adapt
- Trust and encouragement
- Empowers farmers to make the right decision for the farm business
- Meaningful payments





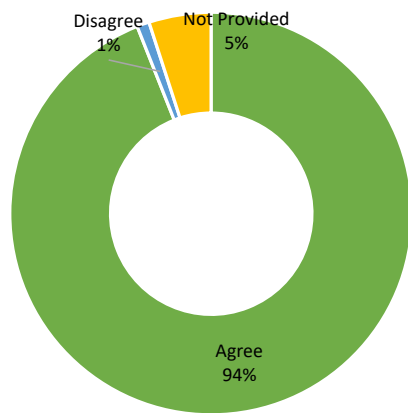
Figure 10: Words used to describe PMP catchments currently.



Figure 11: Words used to describe PMP catchments in twenty years time.



It is important to me that the wildlife on my farm is conserved

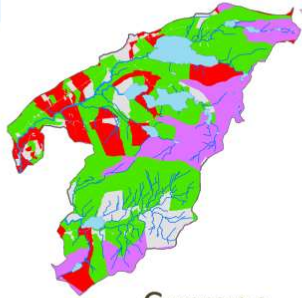


Is a results-based programme fair?

91% Agree

80% of all herd numbers in the catchment area

Catchment Coverage (south-west)

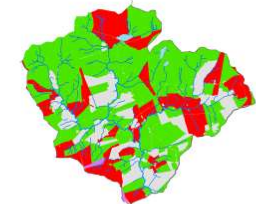


Currane

Signed Contracts: 45

Legend

- Lakes
- Rivers
- PMP Participant
- Non Participant
- Non-priority Commonage
- Other lands (not farmland)



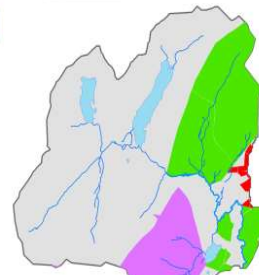
Kerry Blackwater

Signed Contracts: 57



Pearl Mussel Project

Catchment Coverage (west & north-west)

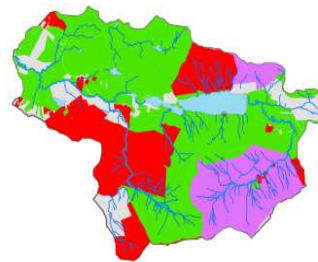


Glaskeelan

Signed Contracts: 12

Legend

- Lakes
- Rivers
- PMP Participant
- Non Participant
- Non-priority Commonage
- Other lands (not farmland)

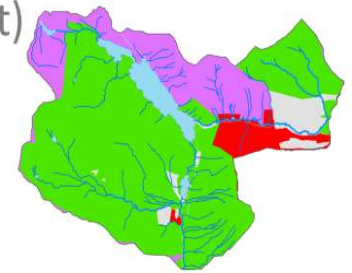


Dawros

Signed Contracts: 46

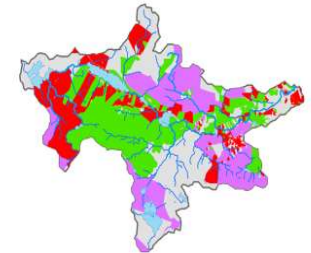


Pearl Mussel Project



Bundorragha

Signed Contracts: 53



Owenriff

Signed Contracts: 37



Pearl Mussel Project





The Pearl Mussel project had over of 850 supporting actions completed with in excess of €265,000 paid out to farmers for delivering supporting actions









Fertiliser & Slurry Guidance

Before Slurry spread

Algae growing in river due presence of nutrients

Dead and stressed pearl mussels

After No slurry spread

Low scoring peatland

Peatland scores improved

The practice of household food waste recycling is given the nature of food waste

The Pearl Mussel Life Cycle

Spawning: Gametes released into the water column and fertilised to form a zygote.

Fertilisation & Brooding: Male mussels open their gills to receive female gametes.

Release: A female mussel releases her young into the water column.

Juveniles: The young mussels settle on the river bed and attach to rocks.

Maturation: Mussels grow and develop their gills.

Adult mussels: A large mussel that can live for up to 100 years.

Nutrients from slurry/fertiliser cause extreme algae growth which smothers the mussels at juvenile stage.

Dead and stressed pearl mussels

Freshwater pearl mussel are in decline due to lack of reproduction, so ensuring the survival of juveniles is key to protecting the species for future generations.

Artificial Fertiliser

Applying artificial chemical phosphorus (P) without soil samples and with insufficient buffer strips in place, is recognised as being a major source of nutrient loss to watercourses in the PMP catchments.

Protected urea fertiliser is preferable to artificial P fertiliser in freshwater pearl mussel catchments. Artificial chemical phosphorus (P) can only be applied once soil sample results show deficiency of P and there is no risk of loss to watercourse.

Options for spreading slurry

- Spreading slurry on suitable ground
- Spreading slurry on bare soil
- Consider split applications
- It should be noted that spreading slurry on floodplain areas is not recommended

Buffer zone needs to be 5m or greater, depending on slope and time of year.

Well vegetated buffer zone

No buffer zone: Think!

P-index 3 or 4: Not suitable for artificial P fertiliser at the point, a risk to water quality and is of no benefit to grass growth.

P-index 1 or 2: Artificial fertiliser acceptable with suitable buffer zone.

Lime is toxic to freshwater pearl mussels. Farmers must seek approval from Project Team before spreading lime. Consent from NPWS is required if lime is to be spread within 20m of a SAC river, stream, or floodplain.

Tips for habitat management

Reduce artificial fertiliser use

Let your advisor know if you are cutting or topping before scoring

ACRES (Agri Climate Rural Environmental Scheme) is the new Agri environment scheme.

There are *two streams* to ACRES:

- ACRES General** is a mix of result-based and prescriptive actions. It is available nationally in all areas outside of the co-operation zones.
- ACRES Co-operation Project** is available in 8 priority areas

ACRES West Connacht includes two Co-operation Project (CP) zones:

- Northwest Connacht
- South Mayo / Connemara

The two zones have been broken down into 6 local areas (see map below) with project officers located in each area.

Our team has a wide range of expertise in agriculture and ecology and are available to provide specialist advice.

Tips for habitat management

PEATLAND HABITAT THREATS & PRESSURES

- NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES** (Rhododendron)
- SPREADING IMMATURE SCRUB** (gorse)
- DAMAGING ACTIVITY** (burning)
- BARE SOIL & EROSION**
- RISK TO WATER QUALITY** (from position & use of supplementary feeding)
- TURBARY ACTIVITY**
- ALTERED HYDROLOGICAL INTEGRITY** (free flowing drains, reducing water table)
- BARE SOIL & EROSION**: Significant rutting & soil disturbance caused by vehicle/tractor access
- Demarc stands of BRACKEN** forming closed canopy, due to drying out or disturbance of peatland.

Management tips:

- Consider type & number of livestock along with the timing of the grazing on the peatland.
- Do not spread slurry, farmyard manure, chemical fertilisers or herbicides on peatland habitat.
- Avoid creating new drains on peatlands as they will dry out the bog. Peat needs to be consistently wet for optimal function.
- Allow existing drains to revegetate where possible to assist with water filtration & storage. Apply to project team for peatland restoration as a landscape action.
- Supplementary feeding with silage can add **unwelcome nutrients and weeds** to the soil. If necessary to supplementary feed, use concentrates, mineral buckets or hay and move feeding points regularly to minimize damage.
- Minimize disturbance near watercourses and consider establishing riparian zones which can help improve water quality and biodiversity.

Feedback from farmers involved in RBAPS

‘Having the reasons behind the actions the team wanted me to carry out explained to me clearly without been told I had to do them was a change from other schemes we were in’

‘ Now I understand the environmental links on my farm, I look for actions I can do myself without needing to be told or paid for them’

‘ All we ever heard from schemes and DAFM is a list of all the things you cannot do, no one ever told us what we could do until we joined the Pearl Mussel Project’



“The benefit I can see from a scheme like the Hen Harrier, is that the policy planners and scientist implementing it, are valuing the farmers’ opinions.”

“Farmers knowledge is as important, as policy makers, if not a little more so. But there is a lot we need to learn from scientist too”.

“The uplands can be best maintained through farming practices, which are supported by schemes like the Hen Harrier project. The GLAS is just a blanket payment, whereas the Hen Harrier project is specific and improving the farm, but improving it with the environment in light, as opposed to just improvement for commercial reasons”.



Successful RBPS for farmers

Communication and Engagement

Needs to make sense to farmers:

Financially

Environmentally

Administratively





Thank you