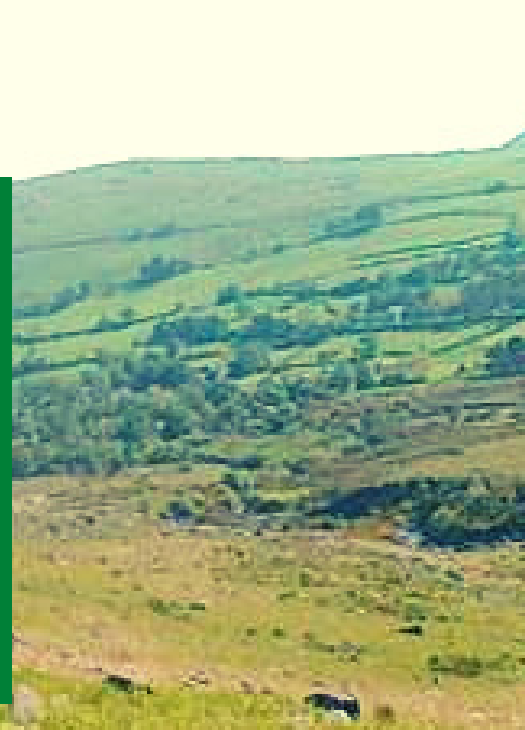




SOUTH KERRY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP CLG.



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2022

MACGILLYCUDDY REEKS

European Innovation Partnership Project

Welcome to our first Newsletter of 2022!

Welcome to the first newsletter from our MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovation Partnership (EIP) project for 2022.

Despite the rollercoaster that was 2021 the Project Team and participants have achieved a huge amount throughout the year.

In this newsletter we will first look back on what has been accomplished so far and what is planned in the coming months.

The Reeks EIP now covers over 700 hectares of High Nature Value farmland in the MacGillycuddy Reeks which also forms part of the Kerry UNESCO Biosphere Reserve. The Reeks project is one of over fifty EIP projects underway in Ireland.

Find out more about Irish EIPs here:
<https://www.nationalruralnetwork.ie/eip-agri/>



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2021 IN NUMBERS

FARMERS PARTICIPATING IN THE PROJECT

38

Farmers have been working with the project for over 3 years now helping to improve the environmental quality of their land.

AREA OF LAND COVERED BY THE PROJECT

700HA

The project is located in the MacGillycuddy Reeks area, home to Ireland's highest mountain ranges.

FARM PLANS CREATED

32

Each year the Project ecologist assesses the land and creates individual farm plans for each participating farmer.

FARMER TRAINING EVENTS HELD

7

Training events included habitat assessment training, managing bracken and scrub and protecting watercourses.

ONLINE TALKS FOR COMMUNITIES AND CONFERENCES

18

Presentations were given at the first National Rhododendron Conference in conjunction with the Kerry UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

AREA OF BRACKEN TREATED

66 HA

The project supported farmers across 16 sites to treat bracken.

AREA OF RHODODENDRON TREATED

131HA

131ha of Rhododendron were under management across 21 sites with a further 2 sites awaiting the commencement of treatment.

PROJECTS FUNDED THROUGH OPEN CALL

21

Applications were invited from farmers in the area for projects supporting biodiversity via an open call in 2021. These included tree planting, invasive species management and conservation fencing.



International Mountain Protection Award for MacGillycuddy Reeks

The EIP Project and Reeks Forum were named as runners up by the UIAA International Climbing & Mountain Federation for the International Mountain Protection Award for 2020 to 2021.

The MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovation Partnership Project & Mountain Access Forum is a truly commendable effort in sharing a vision among landowners, community, recreational users, enterprise and the public partners, with the environment and its protection at heart.

Maintaining trails, working with private landowners, engaging farmers to act as rangers and gathering best practices all continuously foster the development of the area, while simultaneously keeping responsibility and sustainability in mind'.



A total of 24 projects operational in more than 30 countries and on six continents were showcased as part of 2020-2021 MPA. They represent a range of initiatives including encouraging youth participation, tackling pollution and climate change, creating sustainable national parks, spearheading clean-up campaigns and projects focused on women in mountaineering. The MacGillycuddy Reeks initiatives overcame stiff competition from some of the most well know mountain ranges around the world including The Alpine Club of Canada, The Alps Mountaineering Villages, The Himalayan Togetherness for the Sustainability of the Mountain Trails, the United Kingdom H2O Community Hub Scheme and The South American Clean Mountain Project.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Bracken Management

The summer of 2021 was extremely busy!

The project supported farmers across 16 sites to treat bracken which was spreading across their land and threatening rare and protected peatland habitats. Farmers were given the option to carry out the work themselves or to hire in help where needed. Approximately 66ha of bracken was sprayed between July and September 2021. This was no small feat as all work was undertaken using handheld knapsacks on steep, mountainous terrain and farmers frequently had to use innovative solutions to ensure the provision of sufficient water, while protecting watercourses.



The Project Team have been advised by the Department of Food and Rural Affairs that the sale or use of Asulox (the herbicide used to treat bracken) will not be permitted in 2022 and we will be encouraging participating farmers to cut the bracken instead using strimmers. Cutting is labour intensive, but we found that spraying using a handheld knapsack was equally labour intensive and was associated with a number of difficulties including the short licencing period for the use of Asulox, the provision of water and suitable weather conditions.

Cutting will be less restrictive in this regard.

Cattle have also been introduced to a number of sites to trample bracken and where farmers have lighter infestations we will be encouraging them to continue to use this method as part of a long-term management strategy .

Educational Workshops

The project had planned to host a number of educational workshops for farmers in 2021 which had to be postponed on number of occasions due to Covid restrictions. It was finally possible to deliver these last October/ November. Four evening workshops were held covering the following:

- Management & Treatment of Bracken with Enda Mullins, Divisional Ecologist, NPWS;
- Management & Treatment of Scrub with Enda Mullins, Divisional Ecologist, NPWS;
- Maximising Profits from Upland Sheep with Eileen McCloskey, CAFRE (College of Agriculture, Food & Rural Enterprise)
- Protecting our watercourses with Breda Moriarty, LAWPRO.

These talks provided detail information on the current scientific knowledge as well as lessons learned through practical experiences and were well attended by project participants.

Recordings of the talks are available on the website

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Rhododendron Treatment

Successful rhododendron treatment requires long-term commitment with a phased approach over a number of years. The MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP Project has been supporting farmers in the Reeks area to treat rhododendron on their land over the last 3 years.

For each site, the Project Team map the location and infestation levels of rhododendron present. Farmers were given the option to carry out the work themselves or to employ the help of a collective group, as on many sites where infestations are severe farmers would not have the time or resources to tackle this issue alone.

The project has gradually been increasing the number of sites and the area of rhododendron being treated. By the end of our 3rd year (August 2021), approximately 131ha of rhododendron were under management across 21 sites with a further 2 sites awaiting the commencement of treatment.



The collective group has been working primarily in the Gap of Dunloe and Black Valley and has been vital to the successful treatment of rhododendron in these areas. The first collective group was set up in 2019 and a second collective group was recently established. Thus far, the collective group has worked on 13 sites have been responsible for the treatment of 106ha of rhododendron.

Tree planting along watercourses

A key target for the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 is to have at least 10% of agricultural area under high-diversity landscape features. Mature trees can make an important contribution to this landscape target. An option for tree planting along watercourses was included as part of The MacGillycuddy Reeks EIP 2021 Open Call, thus supporting farmers to plant more trees in the Reeks landscape provided it is compatible with the nature conservation objectives of the site. In particular farmers were encouraged to plant native trees along watercourses, where appropriate, to help with bankside stabilisation and to add diversity to the landscape. Farmers were advised to use native species of local provenance such as Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Oak (*Quercus petraea*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*), Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Scot's Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*).



Meet our New Development Officer!



South Kerry Development Partnership in conjunction with the MacGillycuddy Reeks Mountain Access Forum is delighted to welcome Gerald McEnery as its new Development Officer.

The forum which represents the interests of the local farmers, landowners, businesses, communities, guides and recreational users of Ireland's largest mountain range was established under an initiative of Comhairle na Tuaithe, the Countryside Council back in mid-2014 and has been working tirelessly since then to protect, manage and sustainably develop this unique landscape.

"I'm delighted to have the opportunity to work with the Forum, Communities surrounding the MacGillycuddy Reeks, as well as government departments such as the Department of Rural & Community Development who are funding this position. Being from Killarney I have spent many years enjoying and exploring these mountains and having the opportunity to give back and help preserve them is amazing"

Gerald looks forward to liaising with local landowners and organisations in helping to promote the safe and responsible use of the MacGillycuddy Reeks so that these important habitats can continue to be enjoyed by all.

Gerald can be contacted on 0879856585 or by email at macgillycuddyreeksforum@skdp.net

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The MacGillycuddy Reeks European Innovation Partnership (EIP) Project is a voluntary agri-environmental project funded by DAFM as part of Ireland's Rural Development programme 2014-2020.

