



Pearl Mussel Project

ANNUAL REPORT

June 2019 - June 2020

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Pearl Mussel Project at a glance: June 2019 to June 2020

Over **€600,000** in results-based payments to farmers in December 2019

454 participant farmers following recruitment in Spring 2020

c.**34,000ha** of participating land

84% of farmers in top eight catchments participating

100% retention of participants between 2019 and 2020

61 approved farm advisors

Our research shows that the **peatland scores reflect their carbon benefits**

552 Supporting Actions approved to **118** farmers

1. Introduction

This report describes the work of the Pearl Mussel Project (PMP) team in year two of the programme (June 2019 to June 2020). This was the first full year in the operational phase of the programme and major milestones included farmer intake and training, farm scoring, issuing the first annual results-based payments to participant farmers, approval of annual works plans and implementation of the first Supporting Actions.

1.1 Project Staff Recruitment

Stephen O'Shea joined the PMP Team in February 2020 to replace Tara Challoner as South West catchment officer based in the Kenmare office. Stephen has worked as an agri-environmental consultant since 2015 and will be working with farmers in the south west catchments.



Figure 1: Stephen O'Shea joined the PMP team as South West catchment officer in February 2020.

1.2 Appeals Commissioner

Peter Leonard has been appointed as appeals commissioner for the PMP. The main role of the appeals commissioner is to consider appeals from Programme participants regarding habitat assessments made by the PMP Team or other agents approved to carry out such assessments. No appeals were brought to the appeals commissioner in 2019-2020. Further information on the appeals process can be found in the Programme Terms and Conditions and on the project website.

1.3 Steering Group

The project steering group has continued to meet on a quarterly basis in Galway (August 2019, November 2019, and January 2020). Owen O'Driscoll (ACA president) joined the steering group in place of Con Curtin in November 2019 and two farmer representatives (Sean Sullivan from the Ownagappul catchment and Tom Keane from the Dawros catchment) joined in January 2020.

1.4 DAFM Audit

DAFM completed an audit of the PMP in December 2019. The objective of the audit is to ensure that the controls, processes and procedures applied throughout the programme are fit for purpose. It included a review of a random selection of scorecards from the programme including a farm visit. All additional information requested by the auditors was submitted following the field audit. The programme met all of the requirements of the audit.

2. Farmer Training & Engagement

Farmer training is an annual event in the PMP programme and all participant farmers are required to attend a farmer training day each year. Failure to attend a training event in a given year results in a 10% deduction in the participant's annual results-based payment.

2.1 Farmer Training 2019

The PMP Farmer training events took place between July and October 2019. All participant farmers were invited to attend a full day of training. Multiple training dates were offered in each catchment to try to make the training as accessible as possible for participants. If a participant was unable to attend he/she could nominate someone to attend in their place.



Figure 2: PMP Farmer training event in the Kerry Blackwater in 2019.

The vast majority of participant farmers (96%) attended a training event in 2019 (Table 1). These training days provided participants with an overview of the programme, how the habitat scorecards and whole-farm assessment scorecards work, how payments are calculated, and also provided information on supporting actions. The PMP team took these training events as an opportunity to collect baseline information (through a questionnaire) on the attitude and perspectives of participant farmers towards agri-environmental programmes.

Catchment	Attendance
Currane	41
Ownagappul	37
Glaskeelan	11
Bundorragha	51
Owenriff	37
Dawros	45
Kerry Blackwater	57
Caragh	51
Total Attendance: 330	

Table 1: Attendance at 2019 PMP farmer training days for each catchment.

2.2 Farmer Training 2020

Participant farmers that applied for supporting actions on their farm received an annual works plan in early 2020. This plan outlines the actions that have been approved for their farm. Some of these actions require specialist training, for example the removal of invasive species or drain blocking.

In order to be able to complete these actions participants must complete relevant PMP training. The first of these group training days was held in Killarney National Park in February 2020 and focused on rhododendron control. Due to Covid restrictions we were unable to hold further group meetings and training events during 2020.

To overcome this difficulty we published a series of training videos available through our website on the treatment of Rhododendron and other topics. Where relevant, e.g. Rhododendron control, farmers were given the link to the online video and asked to submit a verification code to us to confirm that they have watched it. Those participants undertaking drain blocking measures were provided one-on-one on-site training.

In the short term, due to the current situation regarding COVID-19 all farmer training will be offered remotely, via online meetings and video resources, which the PMP Team are currently developing.



Figure 3: Rhododendron specialist training day held in Killarney National Park in 2020.

2.3 Online Training Resources

To facilitate training during the Covid pandemic, sixteen training and project update videos have been prepared that cover the following topics:

- Habitat scorecards
- Use of PMP online mapping system
- Use of PMP scorecard and supporting actions app
- Supporting action training (Rhododendron control)
- Farmers update (March 2020)

2.4 Farmer Update Meetings

Update meetings for participant farmers were scheduled to be held in March/April 2020. The first of these meetings were held as planned, however due to COVID-19 restrictions, the remaining meetings were held online via the Zoom platform. The project team was very pleased with the level of attendance and engagement at both the face-to-face meetings and the online meetings.

The main aim of these meetings was to provide farmers with an update on the Programme to date and inform them of upcoming events and deadlines. These meetings were also held as a means of getting feedback from participants on the programme. Overall the feedback was very positive and any issues raised had already been taken into consideration by the project team and incorporated into updates to the programme design for 2020.

Catchment	Date	Meeting venue
Bundorragha	09/03/2020	Glen Keen Farm, Louisburgh
Dawros	10/03/2020	FORUM Connemara, Letterfrack
Glaskellean	11/03/2020	Wilkin's Bar, Churchill
Owenriff	24/03/2020	Online
Ownagappul	31/03/2020	Online
Kerry Blackwater	02/04/2020	Online
Caragh	07/04/2020	Online
Currane	16/04/2020	Online

Table 2: Farmer information meetings held during spring 2020

During these farmer update meetings farmers were also asked to express their interest if they wanted to be a farmer representative for their catchment. The role of the farmer representative is to act as a liaison between farmers in their catchment and the PMP team, to ensure that the Programme works for farmers, while also meeting its environmental targets. The PMP Team are currently in the process of establishing Local Area Groups (LAGs) comprised of catchment representatives.

2.5 Farm Meetings

Numerous one to one on-farm meetings were held between members of the project team and individual farmers throughout the year. Subjects discussed at these meetings varied but the most common topics were: farm management advice, habitat scoring, improving score, appropriate supporting actions, and the implementation of supporting actions.

3. Farm Scoring

Farm scoring took place between the 1st of June and the 15th August 2019. Each PMP approved advisor walked the land of each private farm/commonage they had been assigned and submitted scorecards via the online map. As this was the first year of habitat scoring, the PMP team verified the scores on approximately 60% of all farms. All private and commonage lands were subject to a desktop verification by the PMP Team.

3.1 Habitat quality

A total of 1,798 habitat plots were assessed during the 2019 scoring period. The overall average habitat plot score was 6.3 (scores are rounded to the nearest whole number for the purpose of payment). The scores varied according to the habitat being assessed from an average of 5.6 for grassland, 6.8 for peatland, and 7.4 for woodland. Figure 4 shows the proportional distribution of scores across each habitat type.

Considerably more grassland plots scored <4 than peatland or woodland. Plots receiving <4 do not receive a PMP payment and also impact the rate at which other plots are paid on, as they take up the highest payment bands. Grassland is traditionally the most intensively managed of the three habitats and generally represents higher risk of negative impacts on water quality. It is hoped that the incentive of higher results-based payments, the availability of supporting actions, and additional supports from the PMP Team (for example environmental workshops) will see an increase in grassland plot scores over the lifetime of the project.

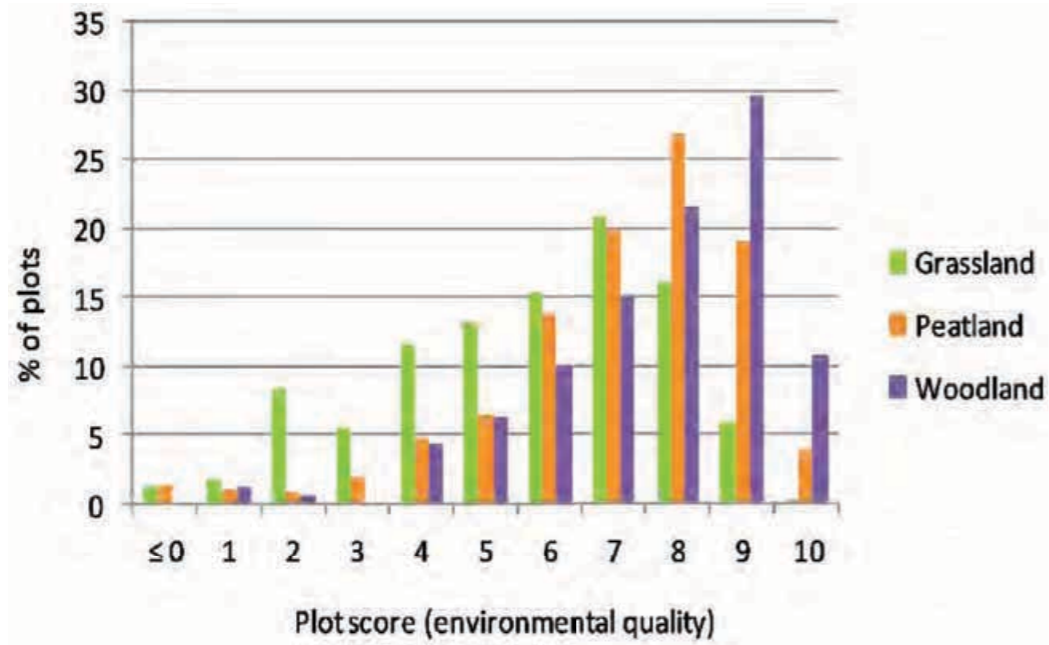


Figure 4. Proportional distribution of plots by habitat quality score.

3.2 Whole-Farm Assessments and Commonage Unit Assessments

Whole-farm and Commonage Unit Assessments (application of whole-farm assessment to commonages) capture the overall risk of impacts of the farm or commonage to water quality. The whole-farm assessment considers the condition of watercourses (flow, buffer zones, and damage), nutrient balance on the farm / commonage, and where applicable, farmyard management. A total of 248 whole-farm assessments were carried out and 36 commonage unit assessments. The result of the assessment is expressed as one of four categories; excellent (1.2), Good, (1), Inadequate (0.6), and Poor (0.3).

The results of all whole-farm and commonage unit assessments are illustrated in Figure 5.

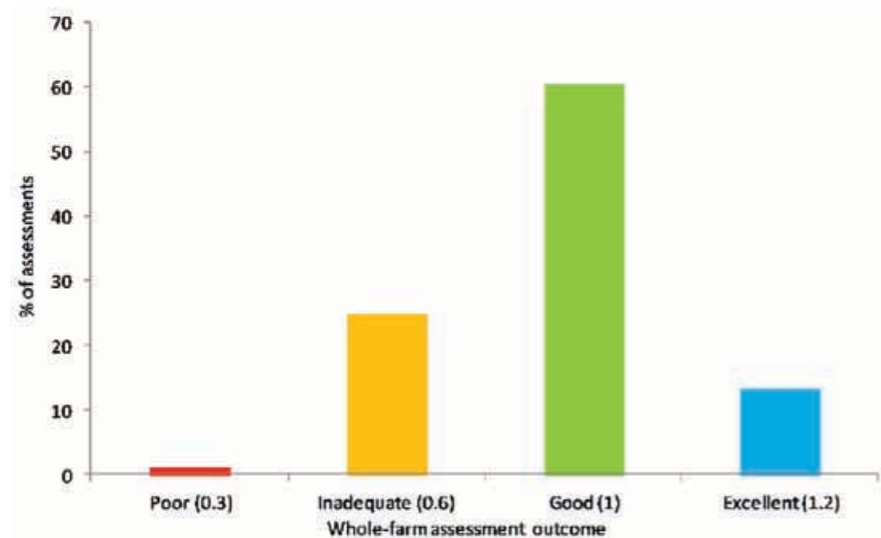


Figure 5. Distribution of whole-farm assessments across all PMP catchments. This includes commonages and private lands.

The scores (habitat and whole-farm assessment) obtained in 2019 represent the baseline environmental quality of participating farmland in Year 1 of the Programme. Changes in these scores in subsequent years of the programme will be used to measure the environmental impact of the Programme.

4. Annual Results-based Payments

In December 2019 participant farmers received their first PMP results-based payment. Over €600,000 was paid out to over 300¹ participants. The minimum payment was €300 and the maximum payment in 2019 was just over €10,000. The average payment received by farmers was €2,000.



Figure 6. Average payments received by PMP participants in 2019.

These payments provide a new stream of income for many farmers in the catchment areas and this is the first time a value has been put on the environmental quality of their land. These payments represent the baseline environmental quality and for the majority of participants there is scope to improve their plot habitat scores, and therefore their annual payments over the lifetime of the Programme.

5. Annual Works Plans & Supporting Actions

Following the verification of farm scores and issuing of results-based payments, farm advisors were asked to submit supporting actions on behalf of participating farmers. The aim of supporting actions is to increase the environmental quality, and therefore results-based payment, on the farm. As of April 2020, 118 farmers were issued with annual works plans which list approved supporting actions.

A total of 552 supporting actions were submitted by PMP approved advisors to the PMP Team via the online mapping system. Each action was individually reviewed by the PMP Team and either approved or declined. Actions that are approved appear on the farmers' Annual Works Plan. It is not compulsory to carry out all (or any) of the actions listed on the plan, however it is likely that without implementing any of the recommended supporting actions farmers may not see an increase in their results-based payment. A total of 118 annual works plans have been issued to programme participants, 6 in 2019 and 112 in 2020. The most common measures included on plans were: L1 Post and wire fence (71 approved), W1 Peat dams (53 approved), L12 Galvanised gate 12ft (45 approved), and L17 Water trough (standard all inclusive) (33 approved).

¹ Forty participants were under contract with the Kerry Life Programme until the end of 2019 and therefore did not receive a PMP payment.



Figure 7. Northwest Catchment Officer, Mary McAndrew in a peatland commonage SAC before (left-hand photo taken in January) and after (right-hand photo taken in late summer) implementation of supporting actions by commonage shareholders. Although the photos are taken in different seasons, a marked recovery in peatland vegetation is apparent. The Commonage Unit Score has increased from 0.6 to 1 in addition to an increase in habitat score from 0 to 4.

During spring 2020, the PMP Team developed a mobile app for farmers to submit payment claims. Once supporting actions have been completed participants can submit their payment claim and any receipts (if required) to the PMP Team and payments will be issued on a quarterly basis. We intend to issue the first batch of 2020 supporting action payments in July 2020.

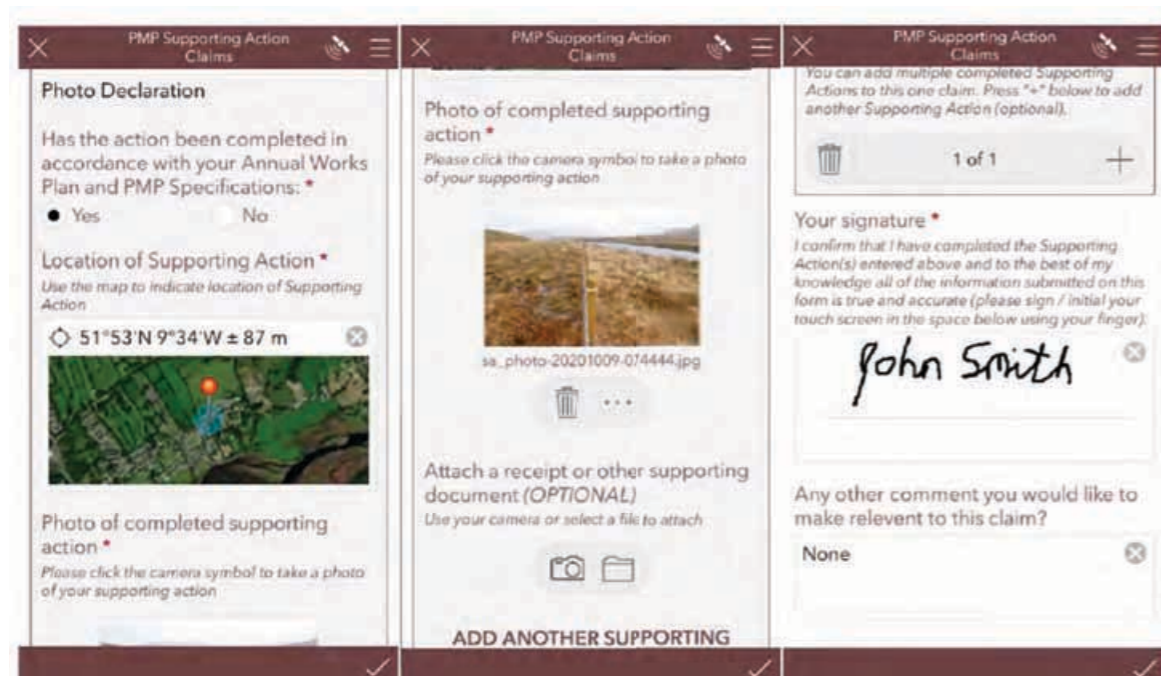


Figure 8: Supporting actions submission app developed by the PMP Team.

Sample supporting actions completed in 2019-20 include various drain blocking and rewetting measures in plots totalling >150ha, livestock crossing, fencing and sheep dipping measures.



Figure 9. Drain-blocking measures completed in spring 2020 with rapid recovery of vegetation that reactivates important wet flush areas that reduces silt loads to the river.

6. Refining Programme Design

An important aspect of EIPs is the flexibility to adapt and evolve to incorporate learning and new ideas as the programme develops. During autumn/winter of 2019, the views of those actively involved in the programme were captured through a series of workshops. A total of six meetings were held capturing three key groups comprising participant farmers, PMP advisors, and the PMP team. All attendees participated in Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis of the PMP, which was facilitated in groups of between three and six, ensuring maximum involvement of those involved.



Figure 10. Participants farmers discussing the SWOT of the Pearl Mussel Project in March 2020.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good for local farmers - money coming into area Environmental Scheme for new CAP that's adapted to our area Interest in hill farmers Training and increasing farmer knowledge Keeping watercourses, land & habitat in good condition Increased intake of farmers in 2020 Awareness and something to help Freshwater Pearl Mussel (FMP) Farmer friendly project and great flexibility 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rate of payment Time for training One bad section can affect the entire plot Slow communication with Supporting Actions Implications for future schemes More consultation needed with farmers Advisors fees Other organisations don't seem to be on board with results-based programmes
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good chance to get rid of invasive species Local work and tourism Network/meeting with local people and neighbours Training and knowledge forward Selling area and product Future environmental schemes Improve habitat and water quality 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAP reform Loss of juvenile mussels. Could this end the programme in our catchment? Could PMP actions conflict with existing DAFM schemes? Lack of funding What happens at end of 5 year cycle? Will these programmes be funded under CAP? One farmer could ruin it for everyone

Figure 11. SWOT analysis from the participant farmers' group.

The output of this exercise has directly fed back into refining the PMP. It also provided an opportunity to discuss issues of concern for farmers, advisors and team members.

In addressing items raised during the SWOT analysis, and following on from a review of payments and the remaining project budget, the number of payment bands was adjusted with the aim of improving payments on medium sized farms (Figure 12). The payment rate for a score of 7 was also increased, reducing the gap in payment between a score of 7 and 8. This is to account for the fact that small differences in the scorecard, for example an additional species being recorded, could result in a considerable difference in overall payment.

2019	Payment rates according to quality per ha (€)				2020	Payment rates according to quality per ha (€)			
	Plot score	A 0-15ha	B >15-30ha	C >30-60ha		D > 60ha	Plot score	A 0-30ha	B >30-70ha
<4	0	0	0	0	<4	0	0	0	0
4	68	41	15	4	4	68	15	5	5
5	79	47	18	5	5	79	18	6	6
6	90	54	20	6	6	90	20	7	7
7	101	61	23	7	7	135	30	10	10
8	180	108	40	12	8	180	40	14	14
9	203	122	45	14	9	203	45	15	15
10	225	135	50	15	10	225	50	17	17

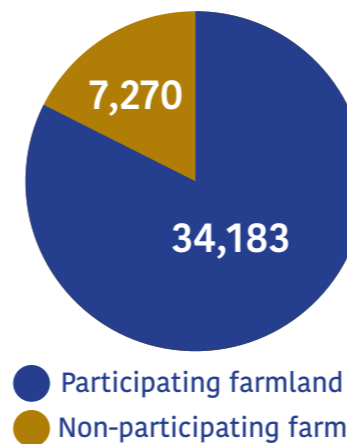
Figure 12: Changes in Pearl Mussel Programme payment rates from 2019 (left) to 2020 (right).

To ensure a more objective determination of the floodplain areas within the programme, areas eligible for the floodplain payment have been extended. In 2020 any participating farmer with habitat plots adjoining the main river channel (including FPM habitat and 500m upstream and downstream of FPM habitat) will be entitled to receive a floodplain payment. There is no change in the rate of payment, but the number of farmers receiving this payment will increase significantly. In 2019, 39 farmers received a floodplain payment. This is expected to rise to over 200 farmers in 2020.

7. Participant Recruitment

There was a second opportunity for farmers to join the Programme in 2020. Expression of Interest (EOIs) forms received between April 2019 and April 2020 were assessed in this second recruitment round and any EOIs that were previously received but were not successful were reassessed. To ensure eligible farmers were aware of the Programme, the DAFM also sent a letter on behalf of PMP. In all, 101 new EOI forms were received before the closing date in 2020 and 124 EOIs that were previously submitted were reassessed.

Following review, 139 farmers were sent contract offers in 2020. A number of applicants who were unsuccessful in 2019 were offered a place in the Programme in 2020 as they are shareholders in commonages which were included in the Programme as priority commonages in 2020. All applicants that had eligible farmland within the catchment were offered a place on the Programme. Those applicants that were unsuccessful either had no land declared on BPS, had a shareholding in a non-priority commonage, or did not have a significant amount (usually <2ha) of eligible land in the Programme catchment areas.



The majority of contract offers issued in 2020 were returned and the Programme now has 454 participants in 2020. Lands owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service within the Glaskeelan, Dawros, and Owenriff catchments are included in the programme from 2020. The lands will be scored annually by NPWS staff but no payments will issue. The proportion of participating farmland across all eight catchments is presented in Figure 13.

Interested farmers can still submit EOIs to the Programme, however it will be dependent on budget as to whether additional participants will be accepted.

Figure 13: Proportion of eligible farmland participating in the Pearl Mussel Programme 2020.

8. PMP Farm Advisors

Following on from advisor training in May 2019, the PMP team has been liaising with the approved advisors on an ongoing basis. A total of 61 farm advisors completed PMP training in 2019, 53 of which appeared on the 2019 PMP Approved Farm Advisor list. A total of 49 approved advisors attended training in May 2020. Training days during 2020 were held via video link and covered project progress, changes in payment rates, liaison with the PMP Team, the online map, and the use of an app for recording and submitting score data in the field. Only those advisors that attended both the 2019 and 2020 training appear on the 2020 approved advisor list.

9. Data Management System

In the first year of the project, the project team spent considerable time and resources designing and developing an integrated data management system (a combination of Filemaker Pro databases and ESRI ArcGIS maps and databases) to securely store, manage and use programme data. This system is used to create farm plans and annual farmer payment sheets. It also provides a means of storing and verifying data submitted to the Programme by PMP Approved Advisors. In late 2019 the database was expanded to support the introduction of participant supporting actions and the preparation of annual works plans. A PMP Appeals database was also developed as part of the programme, to track informal and formal appeals made by participants following the first years programme payments.

Following the introduction of new payment bands and payment rates after the first year of the programme, the database was updated in March 2020 to take account of these changes which will be applied to lands within the programme from 2020 onwards.

9.1. Online map

In 2019 PMP Approved Advisors used the PMP Online Map (web-based mapping application) to submit all data collected in the field to the PMP Team. The online map will again be used by PMP approved advisors in 2020; however, this year scorecard data will be submitted on a mobile app developed by the Project Team (see Section 9.2).

There have been some updates to the online map to make more data available to advisors and simplify the process of submitting supporting actions. Additional data layers that are now available on the online map include NPWS designated sites, recorded monuments, and PMP drainage data. The availability of PMP drainage data in particular will help advisors in planning their field surveys and in selecting appropriate supporting actions for farms. We are making all scorecard data from 2019 and 2020 available for advisors to view on the online map.



Figure 14: App for submitting Pearl Mussel Project scorecard data

9.2. Mobile App for field recording

The PMP Team have developed an app for recording scorecard information on a mobile device in the field. It is hoped that this will reduce the amount of work for advisors and also reduce the potential for data errors when collecting data. All PMP approved advisors have received training in the use of the app. Each advisor has a personal inbox of scorecards assigned to them. The advisors select which plot they are working on in the field and then fill out the scorecard via the app using a series of multiple choice questions (see figure 14). Geo-referenced photos can also be submitted with each scorecard.

10. Monitoring and Research

The PMP Team surveyed a large proportion of farms in 2019. This information was used for farmer payment verifications and also provides baseline information for farm environmental quality in the first year of the programme. This will be used for comparison with subsequent years data to monitor changes in environmental quality during the lifetime of the Programme.

The baseline watercourse surveys carried out in 2019 also provide detailed information on the condition of drains and watercourses at the start of the Programme. Additional baseline watercourse surveys are being undertaken in 2020 on the lands of new participants and priority commonages by the project team and external technical assistants.

The use of scorecards for habitat plot scoring and whole-farm assessments, in addition to having specific watercourse survey questions, mean that these surveys can be replicated at any time and the data can be directly compared to identify changes that have occurred.

Monitoring of Freshwater Pearl Mussel populations is generally carried out every 4-5 years. Surveys were completed on the Bundorragha and Dawros Rivers in 2020 by Evelyn Moorkens and Ian Killeen on behalf of National Parks and Wildlife Service.

The PMP has facilitated a wide range of scientific research to evaluate the ecosystem and attitudinal impacts of the programme including collaboration with the EU INTEREG Carbon Connects Project and supporting two PhD students, Poppy Overy and Verena Berard of Sligo Institute of Technology and Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology. The Carbon Connects project is modelling carbon gain on one of our participant farms in the Owenriff catchment. Initial modelling results suggest a reduction of up to 6 tonnes of CO₂ per hectare per year between low and high scoring peatland. The relationship between score and CO₂ demonstrates the multiple benefits being captured in the scorecards, from which PMP payments are derived.



Figure 15. Carbon monitoring project on one of our participant farms allows us to integrate the delivery of carbon, water and biodiversity benefits into the scoring system. The larger probe on the left measures pH and redox every 30 minutes, the small logger measures water table, the logger attached to wooden log on right is atmospheric pressure needed for adjusting and computing water table depths below peat surface. These provide some of the data required to calculate the carbon impacts of the site. Photo courtesy Dr. Amey Tilak.

Hydrological research is also being undertaken on one of our participating commonages in Co. Mayo where a peatland recovery project is underway. This research is monitoring the change in water flow off the commonage as the extensive bare peat areas revegetate.

11. Publicity

11.1. Conferences and Outreach Events

Members of the PMP Team have attended and presented at a variety of conferences and outreach events during the year, including:

- Connemara Green Festival
- EPA Catchments Conference
- Blue Dot programme workshop, Tullamore
- National Biodiversity Forum CAP 4 Nature workshop
- Ploughing Championships
- Presentation to Kerry Life management group
- Presentation to EIP Advisory Group
- Burren Winterage Festival
- Presenting RBAPS in Brussels
- Water focused EIP workshop, Tullamore
- Hosting of various groups representing programmes in several EU member states interested in the delivery of results-based programmes
- DAFM regarding the future direction of PMP along with Farming for Nature Technical Group

In addition to these the PMP brought a group of ten farmers to the Burren Winterage Festival in October 2019 and also organised a trip for farmers to Antrim to visit a peatland rehabilitation site.



Figure 16: PMP participants at the Burren Winterage Festival 2019.

11.2. Education Resources

It had been planned to visit schools within the catchment areas in spring 2020, however this was not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As an alternative an online educational resource in the form of an interactive story map and associated activity sheets were created by the PMP Team and published online. These resources are accessible through the project website and schools within the catchment areas were also emailed directly with a link to the resource. The story map was launched in April 2020 and to date has been viewed 1,380 times.



Figure 17: Education resources available on the Pearl Mussel Project website.

11.3. Video Resources

The PMP Team have produced a number of videos which are now available to watch on our YouTube channel (links available through the project website). As mentioned above, these videos cover a range of topics including Rhododendron removal, scorecards, and submitting supporting action claims. We hope that these resources will provide additional support to farmers and advisors, in particular as it has not been possible to have in person training events due to COVID-19. These video resources will continue to be added to and we hope to get feedback from farmers at the upcoming farmer training events on how useful they find these video resources.

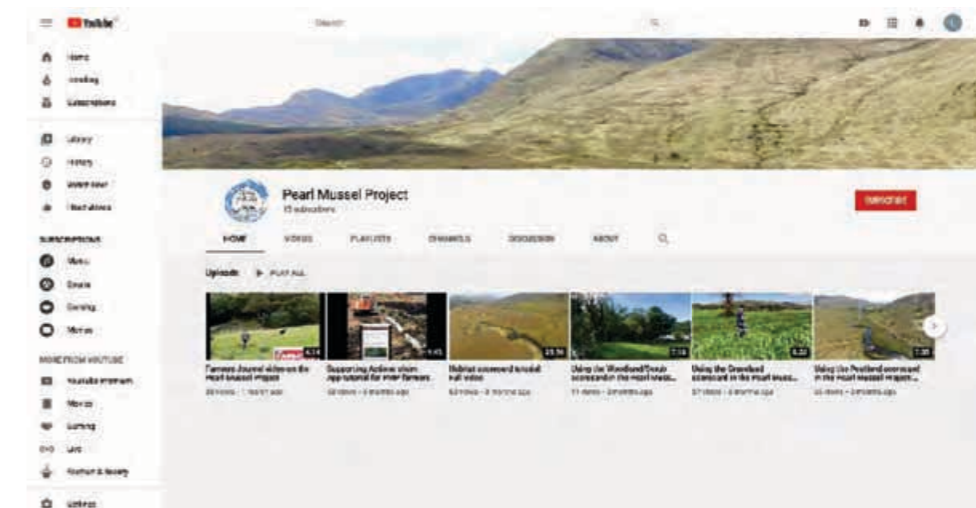


Figure 18: Pearl Mussel Project YouTube channel with 16 videos covering training and project update topics for farmers and PMP advisors.



11.4. Project Newsletter

The first issue of the PMP newsletter was published in March 2020. The aim of the newsletter is to provide a bi-annual news update on the project to participants and others who indicated they would like to be kept up to date on the project. The newsletter is also available to view on the PMP website. In addition to project news, the newsletter also includes a farmer profile and general information and advice relating to a seasonal farming topic. In the first issue of the newsletter the PMP 2021 photo competition was also launched, inviting submissions of photos under the theme ‘Farming for nature in a freshwater pearl mussel catchment’. The winning entries will be featured in a 2021 PMP calendar.

Figure 19: Issue 1 of the Pearl Mussel Project newsletter.

11.5. Website and social media

The official PMP website (<http://www.pearlmusselproject.ie>) was regularly updated during 2019-2020, including project news updates, resources and publications for farmers and farm advisors, and updated Programme maps.

Two new sections were added to the website in 2020, education resources and video resources. Since its launch the PMP website has had over 20,700 unique visitors and 73,800 page views. 11,500 of the unique visitors and 43,000 page views were during the period June 2019-June 2020.

The PMP Facebook (@pearlmusselproject) and Twitter (@pearl_mussel) profiles have been actively maintained during 2019-2020. Posts are regularly made on both accounts relating to project events and news features. Since its launch in June 2018 the PMP Facebook page has gained 772 followers. Over 340 PMP posts have been made to the page since its launch.

The PMP Twitter page was established in January 2019 and currently has 521 followers. Over 190 PMP posts have been made to the page since its launch.

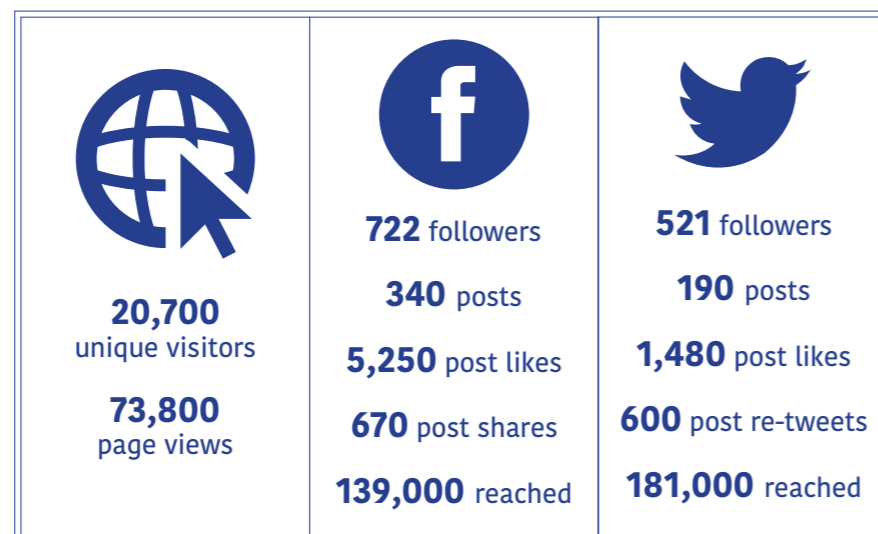


Figure 20: Summary of website and social media activity.

12. Next Steps

2019-2020 was the first year of the “implementation phase” of the Programme. Feedback from participant farmers has generally been positive and the Project Team have tried to address any issues raised. The concept of a results-based payment model is still new to many of the participants and we feel that it will not be until the end of year two of the Programme, where we hope that participants will see increases in payment as a result of changes in management or the implementation of supporting actions, that participants will fully understand the model.

As the Programme progresses we hope that participant farmers will become confident in their understanding of the Programme and will feel a sense of ownership in the Programme. The self declaration of supporting actions completion by farmers using a mobile app will increase farmer involvement and interaction with the Project. We foresee farmers gaining a better understanding of the scoring system as the project progresses and it is possible that farmers may be able to score their own farms towards the end of the Project. We hope to trial this on a small number of farmers using the mobile app to see how viable it would be.

The next steps outlined below are key milestones for 2020-2021 and each subsequent year of the Programme. As these main tasks and work areas are completed each year we foresee the processes becoming more efficient and streamlined.

The key work areas and medium term milestones for 2020-2021 include:

- Support advisors during field season 2019 (Jun – Sep ’20)
- Complete training events for all PMP participating farmers (Oct ’20)
- Complete field verification checks throughout for 2020 field season (Aug - Oct ’20)
- Verify all farm data submitted by advisors (Aug – Oct ’20)
- Analyse and process all watercourse data collated during 2020 watercourse survey (Sep – Nov ’20)
- Issue results-based payments to all participants (Nov – Dec ’20)
- Process supporting actions for 2021 and develop Annual Works Plans for participating farms (Sept-Nov’20)
- Farm advisor refresher training (May ’21)



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Pearl Mussel Project
Bell Height | Kenmare | Co. Kerry | Ireland



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

The Pearl Mussel Project is an EIP (European Innovation Partnership) Locally Led Scheme. The Project is funded by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine as part of Ireland's Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

