

Press Release

DATE: 22 April 2021

Marine experts sounding out salmon, basking sharks, skate, dolphins, whales and seals:

Loughs Agency announces deployment of Europe's largest fish counter

A unique marine research project led by Loughs Agency is underway to study the seas around Ireland and Western Scotland with the deployment of 'Europe's largest fish counter'.

The SeaMonitor project - which is supported by eight leading marine research institutions located in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, the US and Canada - will use innovative marine species tracking technology to better understand and protect vulnerable marine life in our oceans.

Listening stations from Malin Head - Ireland's most northerly point - to the island of Islay in Scotland will record transmissions from a variety of mobile marine species tagged by the project's scientists.

The data collected using acoustic telemetry will be used to support the conservation of vulnerable species such as salmon, basking sharks, skate, dolphins, whales and seals.

Sharon McMahon, Loughs Agency CEO, said the deployment of the fish counter marked a major achievement for the SeaMonitor project. She added: "Loughs Agency is proud to be leading the way alongside expert colleagues to deliver such amazing marine research infrastructure that will ultimately help protect some of our most important species."

Funding for the €4.6m project has been provided by the EU's INTERREG VA Programme (Environment Theme), which is managed by the Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB). Match-funding comes from the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland and the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government in the Republic of Ireland.

Gina McIntyre, CEO of the Special EU Programmes Body, welcomed the announcement. She said: "I'm delighted to see such a significant achievement for the SeaMonitor project, made possible through the EU's INTERREG VA Programme and the efforts of all its partners in Northern Ireland, Ireland and Scotland working together collectively."

"This is a much-needed step forward for the conservation of a number of vulnerable species within our shared oceans. It only serves to highlight the benefits that are created through strong, mutually beneficial cross-border partnerships in the management of marine protected areas and species. Well done to all involved for advancing our understanding of our seas," she added.

Dr. Fred Whoriskey, Executive Director of the Ocean Tracking Network explained: "This project is important in so many ways. It will unite and empower scientists from Europe and abroad to tackle pressing management issues, provide global networking for scientists to efficiently use resources, and engage the public in project outcomes. We are pleased to provide technical support and counsel, as well as tracking infrastructure to SeaMonitor which is contributing to the conservation of Europe's valued marine animals."

Dr Ciaran Kelly, Director of Fisheries Ecosystems and Advisory Services at the Marine Institute added: “We are delighted to collaborate with partners on the SeaMonitor project and provide technical support and ship-time on the Marine Institute’s research vessel, the RV *Celtic Voyager*. Tracking the migration of species and identifying environmental signals influencing their movement is essential to effectively protect and manage our marine ecosystems.”

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For more information about the project visit: www.loughsagency.org/seamonitor, follow the project on Twitter @SeaMonitor1 or watch our 3 minute project summary video (available up to 4k): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FgEQGA3y2MY>

For more information on the technology being used and how it works watch: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s10CnCZr3jE>

All media enquiries and interview requests to: Loughs Agency.
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Notes for Editors:

The SeaMonitor Partnership

1. Loughs Agency (Lead Partner)

An agency of the Foyle, Carlingford and Irish Lights Commission (FCILC), established as one of the cross-border bodies under the 1998 Good Friday Agreement between the UK and Ireland. The Agency aims to provide sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits through the effective conservation, management, promotion and development of the fisheries and marine resources of the Foyle and Carlingford Areas. In its role as lead partner the Agency co-ordinates the delivery of the five species models and the three management plans. The Agency also leads the salmon fieldwork and research of the River and Lough Foyle area. www.loughs-agency.org

2. Marine Institute

The Marine Institute is the Irish national agency for marine research, technology, development and innovation, promoting sustainable development of marine resources. The Institute’s main role in SeaMonitor is to provide technical support for the deployment and maintenance of acoustic receivers and other monitoring equipment, data acquisition and data analyses. The Marine Institute contributes towards the objective of strengthening current information and filling in crucial information gaps on specific areas and habitats of interest across jurisdictions and identify the relative importance of these habitats at the different stages of migration of highly mobile marine species. www.marine.ie

3. Queen’s University Belfast

Queen's University Belfast is one of the leading universities in the UK and Ireland and a member of the Russell Group of UK research intensive universities. The main role of Queen’s University in

SeaMonitor is leading the fieldwork and research of basking shark and skate in the seas off Ireland, Western Scotland and Northern Ireland. www.qub.ac.uk

4. Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)

AFBI's role in SeaMonitor is to lead on the salmon research, tagging and releases from the River Bush area of Northern Ireland. AFBI carries out high technology R&D, statutory, analytical & diagnostic testing and consultancy work for government and commercial companies globally. Fisheries and Aquatic Ecosystems Branch provides research, monitoring and technology transfer in support of evidence-based sustainable management of freshwater fisheries and marine resources in Northern Ireland. AFBI is a Non-Departmental Public Body sponsored by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. www.afbni.gov.uk

5. University of Glasgow

Founded in 1451, the University of Glasgow is the fourth oldest university in the English-speaking world and is a member of the prestigious Russell Group of leading UK research universities. As the SeaMonitor's only Scottish partner, the University's role in SeaMonitor is to provide a lead role in the salmon research elements in the River Clyde area of Western Scotland. www.gla.ac.uk

6. University College Cork

University College Cork is a constituent university of the National University of Ireland and is located in the city of Cork. UCC's main role in SeaMonitor is to provide a lead role in the seal fieldwork and research elements. www.ucc.ie

7. Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology

Founded in 1972 as the Regional Technical College in Galway, the Institute has expanded to five locations in the west of Ireland. The Marine and Freshwater Research Centre (MFRC) at the Institute is a dynamic group working to enhance the management of marine and freshwater ecosystems worldwide. As part of the SeaMonitor project the Institute carries out acoustic monitoring of cetaceans www.gmit.ie

8. Ocean Tracking Network – Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia, Canada

OTN's mission is to inform the sustainable management and stewardship of aquatic animals by providing knowledge on their movements, habitats and survival in the face of changing global environments. As part of the SeaMonitor Project OTN provide invaluable technical advice, equipment and support in setting up and testing the array. www.oceantrackingnetwork.org

9. University of California Davis

UC Davis is a public institution, land-grant university and pioneer in interdisciplinary problem-solving. Its four colleges, five professional schools, more than 100 academic majors and 86 graduate programs make it the most comprehensive of all the University of California campuses. UC Davis provides invaluable technical advice, equipment and research assistance in setting up and testing the array. www.ucdavis.edu

Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)



The SEUPB is a North/South Implementation Body sponsored by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland and the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform in Ireland. It is responsible for managing two EU Structural Funds Programmes, PEACE IV and INTERREG VA which are designed to enhance cross-border co-operation, promote reconciliation and create a more peaceful and prosperous society. The Programmes operate within a clearly defined area including Northern Ireland, the Border Region of Ireland and in the case of INTERREG VA, Western Scotland.

The INTERREG VA Programme has a value of €283 million and aims to address the economic and social problems which result from the existence of borders. For more information, please visit www.seupb.eu