

IRD Duhallow Farming for Blue Dot Catchments EIP Project CAP Strategic Plan Submission

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The Duhallow Farming for Dot Catchments EIP Project is a €1.47 million results based project funded by the Department of Agriculture food and the Marine. The project rewards farmers for protecting, restoring and enhancing the river water quality of the Allow Catchments in North Cork. The catchment includes high status objective water bodies including the rivers allow, Dalua and Owenanare.

Results based measures in the project include habitat retention measures such as wet grassland, species rich grassland, alluvial woodland, Instream wooded habitat and critical source areas. The retention, protection and enhancement of critical source areas within the project area aims to reduce over land flow of organic manures and the subsequent loss of phosphorous and nitrogen to receiving water bodies in the catchment. These flow pathways also act as nutrient pathways for leached nitrogen from free draining soils to receiving drains, streams and rivers. These critical source areas and nutrient flow pathways are a targeted measure in the EIP project. Once identified the participating farmer is paid a results based payment through one of two streams (i) habitat retention for the CSA and (ii) a strategic buffer around the flow pathway (see figures 1 & 2 pages 2 & 3).

The project utilises all available data and mapping systems including the DAFM’s GLAM mapping system to identify these CSA’s and natural flow pathways coupled with ground truthing through a field survey. An initial field survey was conducted on all active EIP farms with a subsequent desk top review carried out. During the course of this survey all hydrological features of the participating farms were mapped. These hydrological pathways included, rivers, streams, drains, wetlands, CSA’s and flow pathways. The current availability of the catchments.ie online mapping facility that identifies CSA’s and natural flow pathways through the Pollution Impact Potential (PIP) maps has provided an additional mapping tool for the project to support the identification of the natural flow pathways in the catchment. This will allow the project to target specific areas within the catchment for strategic buffers. These buffers when fenced are approximately 20 metres by 40 – 60 metres in size with the project participant receiving a results based payment based on a measure scorecard. The scorecard is based on positive factors such as intact fencing, positive plant species indicator list and the

benefit to the watercourse with a reduction in payment for any negative management practises identified such as newly maintained drains, poaching within the buffer or the application of organic or inorganic fertilisers within prescribed buffers to the any adjacent receiving water body.

The overall CSA identified through ground survey and the catchmetns.ie PIP maps where applicable can receive a results based payment by inclusion as a wet grassland or semi-natural grassland (see fig 3 page 3). These measures are scored using scorecards developed by the project team. The scorecards record both positive and negative factors. Positive factors include plant species content, species diversity and species abundance. Negative factors which may reduce the results based payment can include newly maintained drains and non-adherence to buffers when applying fertilisers and pesticides.

These project measures are multi beneficial as the fencing off of these natural flow pathways and the retention and enhancement of CSA's increases biodiversity by the rewilding of areas within the riparian zone and reduce and/or prevent nutrient run-off to receiving water bodies. In conclusion the Duhallow Blue Dot Catchments EIP Project makes this submission to include the strategic fencing of natural flow pathways and a results based payment for the retention and enhancement of Critical Source Areas as a measure in the forthcoming Eco-schemes where possible and the AECM scheme in CAP 2023. In addition, the use of the catchment.ie PIP maps should be greater utilised as a base layer map for the implementation of these measures in a wider DAFM Agri-environmental scheme or an Eco scheme.



Fig 1: A natural flow pathway strategic Buffer fencing off as a measure in the Duhallow Blue Dot Catchments EIP Project (source IRD Duhallow 2021)



Fig 2: A natural flow pathway strategic Buffer fencing off as a measure in the Duhallow Blue Dot Catchments EIP Project (source IRD Duhallow 2021)



Fig 3: A Critical source area included as the measure Wet grassland retention for the Duhallow Blue Dot EIP Project (source IRD Duhallow)