



SPECIAL EU PROGRAMMES BODY

Project Case Study: Working Together Putting Healthy Rivers at the Heart of our Communities

THEME:

Environment

FUNDING (ERDF+MATCH):

€4,909,921.26

MATCH FUNDING:

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; and the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage

LEAD PARTNER:

Northern Ireland Water

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI), The Rivers Trust, East Border Region Ltd, Ulster University, Irish

Start Date: 01/10/2016

End Date: 30/09/2022



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During the summer months of 2021, the Source to Tap project ran a number of training sessions in Riverfly Monitoring, for volunteers to learn how to measure the health of the rivers in the Erne and Derg catchments. Volunteers were trained in how to collect, identify and record river invertebrate samples with a view that they will continue to regularly monitor river health at appropriate times throughout the year, playing an instrumental role in its protection.

Community Engagement has been at the heart of the Source to Tap project and learning about water quality helps the volunteers make the connection between the health of their nearby rivers and lakes, and the water that comes out of our taps.

The Riverfly Monitoring technique involves collecting a sample of invertebrates from the bed of a river and recording what is found. As some invertebrates are more sensitive to pollution than others, the type and number of species recorded can tell us a lot about the health of that section of river. The insects are sorted, counted and recorded, with the final score being checked against a trigger level score for that site, set by the local environment agency. Using a standardised technique allows for comparison over time and across different locations.

“I learned a lot about how to identify the different riverflies, which has been great. It has inspired me to go out and research them more. The whole day has been really educational and I will definitely try and link up with other people in the Erne catchment to meet up and form a group.”

Volunteer from county Fermanagh - River Arney.

The Source to Tap project has successfully trained 43 volunteers to carry out Riverfly Monitoring safely and correctly, 15 of whom were trained this summer.

Three training events were held at Belcoo, Belturbet and Killeter with attendees coming from various communities including anglers, wild swimmers, walkers, bird watchers, educators and more.

All the volunteers were deeply invested in the health of their local waterways and very interested in collaborating across the border to ensure water quality is being monitored and properly addressed. These events allowed volunteers to make the connections needed to make citizen science efforts effective. They will continue to carry out monitoring work on the cross border Erne and Derg catchments beyond the life of the Source to Tap project.