APPENDIX No. 19

Proposed Monitoring for Stony Bank and Salt Marsh Habitat / Vegetation at Mweeloon

PROPOSED MONITORING FOR STONY BANK AND SALT MARSH HABITAT / VEGETATION AT MWEELOON

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Proposed monitoring for stony bank and salt-marsh habitat/vegetation at Mweeloon

A total of 50 to 60 permanent vegetation monitoring plots will be established on areas of stony bank and salt-marsh habitat throughout Mweeloon prior to the implementation of habitat management measures. These plots will generally be 2x2 metres in area and will be representative of the range of vegetation composition and structure throughout the area. Photographs and GPS co-ordinates of these plots will be taken in order to enable relocation of the plots in subsequent surveys. During surveys the following data will be recorded within plots.

(1) Vascular plant and moss presence and % cover in plot

(2) Average height of vegetation (cm)

(3) Flowering of plant species

(4) Percentage cover of shrub, herb and bryophyte layers

(5) Depth of soil

(6) Slope of ground surface

(7) Aspect of ground surface

(8) Percentage cover of bare soil and stone

(9) Percentage cover of animal dung

(10) Evidence of poaching by livestock

It is proposed that these monitoring plots will be re-surveyed on a bi-annual basis, at the beginning of the growing season, i.e. mid-March to mid-April and towards the end of the growing season, i.e. late July to mid-August. These surveys will monitor and detect any changes in vegetation composition/structure and habitat condition. The methodology will follow closely the approach taken in the recent salt-marsh and stony bank monitoring schemes undertaken by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (see McCorry and Ryle 2009, Martin *et al.* 2017).

In addition to the specific detailed monitoring outlined above, a walkover monitoring visit will be conducted every two weeks between March and early October. The main purpose of this walkover survey will be to monitor for localized signs of overgrazing and trampling which will inform the fine-tuning/adjustment of the grazing regime.

References

Martin, J.R., Daly, O.H. and Devaney, F.M. (2017). *Survey and assessment of vegetated shingle and associated habitats at 30 coastal sites in Ireland.* Irish Wildlife Manuals, **No.98**. National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and GaeltachtAffairs, Dublin.

McCorry, M. and Ryle, T. (2009). *Saltmarsh Monitoring Project 2007-2008.* Contract reference D/C/227. A Report for Research Branch, National Parks and Wildlife Service Final Report (2009).