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Press Release

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British and French scientists unite over salmon crisis

Globally, Atlantic salmon have suffered a massive 70 per cent decline in the past 30 years and this continuing downward spiral has triggered a major new research collaboration by British and French scientists who are pooling expertise, resources and 30 years of data to maximise current international research efforts.

This significant 3-year collaborative study called the Morfish (Monitoring for Migratory Fish) project comprises two leading research partners, including the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (1); a leading UK research charity and the Institut National De La Recherche-Agronomique (INRA) (2) a French Government research Agency as well as a range of stakeholders, including Government departments, conservation organisations and local communities.

Funding amounting to 2.5m Euro for this important initiative has been achieved through the European Union's Interreg 1VA France (Channell) – England programme (3), which

encourages cross-border partnerships and demonstrates the importance placed on the potential of the Morefish project to unlock some of the complexities of salmon declines.

Unfortunately, there isn't an easy solution for reversing the decline in salmon populations -- everything from overfishing, climate change and habitat destruction have been linked to salmon depletion. The fish's complicated life cycle - salmon begin life in a stream, migrate to sea for their adult life and finally return to their birthplace in order to reproduce, makes it even harder to pinpoint the primary factors leading to each population's fall.

Dylan Roberts, Head of Fisheries Research with the GWCT explains the relevance of the new Morfish Project. He said, "With collapses in salmon populations continuing there is an urgent need to gain a better understanding of the causes of these declines. Mostly these relate to environmental change both in freshwater and marine habitats as well as climate change. Both the GWCT and INRA between them hold more than 30 years of under-exploited data on salmon and by combining our considerable experience, expertise and technologies we believe that this cross-border research effort will add considerably to the pool of knowledge currently available to the international scientific community."

The GWCT's Salmon & Trout Research Centre on the River Frome in Dorset, is one of the most technically advanced salmon monitoring centres in the country and has been counting, tagging and monitoring salmon since 1973. This advanced river laboratory is providing the most comprehensive record of salmon movement in England and Wales and complements the work being carried out by the INRA in France on the rivers Scorffe and Oir.

According to the MorFish partners, the project will make the monitoring and data collection work already achieved on migratory fish in the Channel zone much more compatible, useful and more available. Dylan Roberts concludes, "We are particularly concerned about the future of southern European stocks of salmon which are under threat from recent as well as future changes in climate. Although the issue of migratory fish decline is global, we believe that to address this massive problem requires local, regional, national and cross-border cooperation. The project aims to do just this and the results will help us gain a much better understanding of cross-border biodiversity as well as helping to improve the protection and preservation of this iconic species, which is so important to us all both economically and ecologically."

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The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust is an independent wildlife conservation charity which carries out scientific research into Britain's game and wildlife. We advise farmers and landowners on improving wildlife habitats and we lobby for agricultural and conservation policies based on science. We employ 14 post-doctoral scientists and 50 other research staff with expertise in areas such as birds, insects, mammals, farming, fish and statistics. We undertake our own research as well as projects funded by contract and grant-aid from Government and private bodies. The Trust is also responsible for a number of Government Biodiversity Action Plan species and is lead partner for grey partridge and joint lead partner for brown hare and black grouse. For Information, contact: Morag Walker – Head of Media, Telephone – 01425-652381 (direct 01425-651000) Mobile – 07736-124097 www.gwct.org.uk

The Institut National De La Recherche-Agronomique (INRA) INRA is the leading European agricultural research institute and one of the foremost institutes in the world for agriculture, food and the environment. It is also the second largest public research institute in France. Founded in 1946, the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA) is a public

research institution under the joint authority of the Ministry of Higher Education and Research and the Ministry of Agriculture, Agrifood and Forests. The research conducted at INRA concerns agriculture, food, nutrition and food safety, environment and land management, with particular emphasis on sustainable development. Government authorities, the farming and industrial worlds, and associations of citizens or consumers all have a crucial role to play in orienting, monitoring and valorizing research. INRA has an active partnership policy with: the socio-economic world: private companies, agricultural organisations, local authorities, public authorities which call upon the expertise of INRA scientists on the national, European and international levels. INRA is ranked 2nd in the world and 1st in Europe for publications in the agricultural sciences, and plant and animal sciences. It maintains scientific partnerships with major scientific research institutes worldwide, universities, and agronomy and veterinary schools, and is committed to helping build the European Research Area. It develops a large number of collaborative projects and exchanges with the scientific community in numerous countries in Europe, America, Asia and Africa. Human resources: 1,800 researchers, 2,500 engineers, 4,000 technicians and administrative staff, nearly 2,000 PhD students and more than 1,800 foreign students and researchers and approximately 2,000 interns hosted each year in research units. Organisation: 13 scientific divisions, 18 regional research centres, 6 metaprogrammes. Budget: €881,61 million for 2013. Status: public scientific and technological establishment (EPST)

The European Interreg IVA France (Channel) – England Programme 2007-2013 is the IV generation of the Interreg programme between France and England. Around the Channel, French and English cross-border territories share common challenges. Since 1990, the European Union has run the Interreg programme (strand A) which subsidises projects with cross-border partners willing to work together. Each border area thus becomes a forum for exchanges and orchestrated efforts between European neighbours. The programme has a total of 173.5 million euros in grant available through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

