

Penobscot River Habitat Focus Area

Background

Habitat Focus Areas are targeted places where NOAA is collaborating with communities to measurably improve the environment through NOAA's mission of science, service, and stewardship.

Ten Areas for Action

NOAA selected ten Habitat Focus Areas nationwide to help communities protect and restore valuable natural resources that support local economies. Experts in the HFAs design and implement solutions to address threats to coastal habitats, working with partners to achieve shared conservation goals within a 5-year period. Using habitat science and best practices, HFAs demonstrate a concrete application of NOAA's mission.

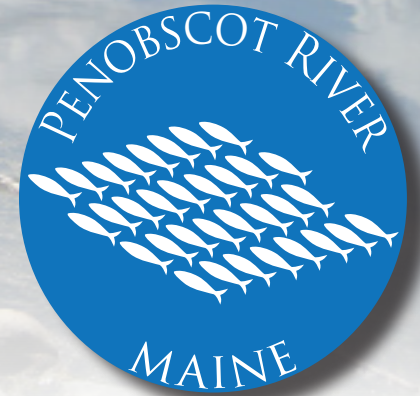
NOAA Habitat Blueprint

Habitat Focus Areas are part of the Habitat Blueprint: a framework for NOAA to address the growing challenge of habitat loss. Visit the Habitat Blueprint website at <https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov>.



The Penobscot River is one of ten NOAA Habitat Focus Areas across the U.S.

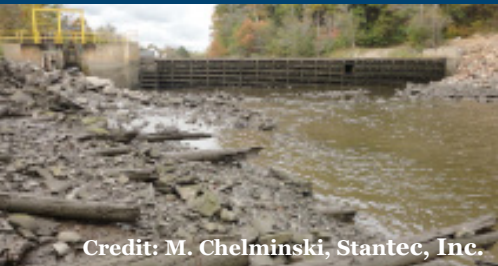
Tour all ten online at [HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov](https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov)



The longest river within Maine, the Penobscot River and its watershed cover nearly one-third of the state. Historically, fisheries on the Penobscot River were bountiful. Today, its Atlantic salmon (pictured) are endangered and many other sea run fish are at historically low numbers. Dams and other barriers threaten its 12 migratory fish species, which are important to the Penobscot Indian Nation—one of the vital partners of NOAA's Penobscot River Habitat Focus Area.

Places ▶

Thick woods line the banks of the Penobscot River and its upper tributaries touch Canada. Nearly 270 miles south the river drains into Penobscot Bay and the Gulf of Maine. The river's freshwater habitat supports river herring, sturgeon, brook trout, Atlantic salmon and many other species. The historical legacy of the lumber industry and current dams have affected the river's water quality and ability to support these migrating fish by blocking access to important habitat.



Credit: M. Chelminski, Stantec, Inc.

Many dams still exist within the Penobscot River watershed.



The watershed of the Penobscot River Habitat Focus Area drains into the Atlantic Ocean.



Work to restore the Penobscot River may involve removing barriers or building new fishways.

Issues ▶

Dams block salmon and other migrating fish from reaching their spawning grounds in upstream river habitats, ponds, and lakes. Growing fish face obstacles swimming downstream and into the Atlantic Ocean. People still fish the Penobscot River, but numbers of wild fish fall far short of the many millions historically present in its waters. The Habitat Focus Area aims to provide innovative solutions to the issues.



Partners ▶

A central team and partners coordinate on-the-ground and in-the-water efforts in Maine, and those partners include:

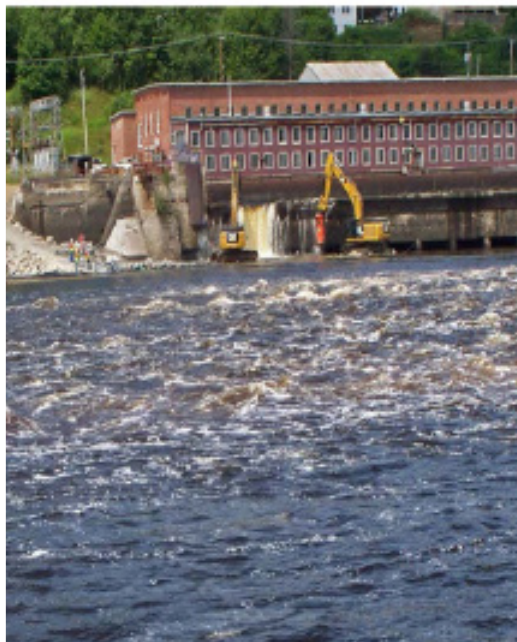
- Penobscot Indian Nation
- State of Maine
- Atlantic Salmon Federation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Maine Audubon Society
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Maine Sea Grant
- Maine Coast Heritage Trust

Priorities ▶

The Penobscot HFA team aims to achieve the following five goals:

1. Restore river herring and endangered and threatened species, such as Atlantic salmon, Atlantic sturgeon, and shortnose sturgeon.
2. Improve the numbers of small river fish reaching the Atlantic Ocean.
3. Increase the quantity and quality of open river habitat.
4. Promote habitat restoration.
5. Increase collaboration and information sharing.

To achieve these goals, NOAA is building on local and regional momentum to protect and restore river habitats. The focus is a place—the Penobscot River, Maine—but the real drivers of positive change are its people.



Veazie Dam: built in 1912, taken down 101 years later, in 2013.

Local communities support the HFA by working with NOAA and other partners to replace culverts, remove dams, and build fishways on publicly-owned infrastructure.

Plans ▶

For more background and resources about this Habitat Focus Area, connect with the HFA section on the Habitat Blueprint website:

[HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov](https://www.HabitatBlueprint.noaa.gov).

Visit the story map for a visual tour of the HFA. For details about its goals, download the Implementation Plan.

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