



NOAA

Habitat Blueprint

NOAA Selects Maine's Penobscot River Watershed as Next Habitat Focus Area

Maine's Penobscot River watershed has been selected as a Habitat Focus Area under NOAA's Habitat Blueprint.

A Rich Cultural Heritage

The largely forested Penobscot River watershed encompasses approximately 8,570 square miles. With many lakes and multiple tributaries, it offers important habitat for 11 sea-run—or migratory—fish species and other wildlife. Historically, the fish populations on the Penobscot River were bountiful. Population estimates ranged from 14 to 20 million alewives; 75,000 to 100,000 Atlantic salmon; and 3 to 5 million American shad.

The Penobscot River watershed has a rich cultural history of commercial, recreational, and sustenance fishing. It is home to the Penobscot Indian Nation, which occupies Indian Island—part of their ancestral homeland, surrounded by Penobscot waters.



Photo courtesy of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust



NOAA worked with partners to remove the Great Works Dam (shown before, during removal and after). Photos courtesy of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust



A Habitat in Need

Dams, culverts, water pollution, and overfishing have nearly eliminated many sea-run fish species from this watershed. Improving access to habitat on this river is particularly important for the recovery of endangered Atlantic salmon. The Penobscot is the largest Atlantic salmon run in the U.S.

Dams on the river and the decline of sea-run fish have contributed to a loss of recreational activities and economic opportunities, such as white water rafting and sportfishing. Poorly maintained dams also pose a safety risk throughout the watershed.

Collaboration

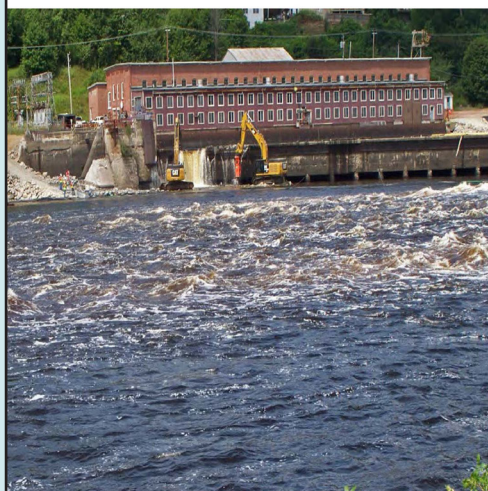
NOAA and partners are committed to a watershed approach to conservation and restoration. We focus on the connections between river, estuary, and ocean habitats.

We are working together to better manage the Penobscot River ecosystem and recover threatened and endangered fish populations. NOAA's work on the Penobscot also supports America's Great Outdoors Initiative and the river is part of the Northern Forests and Waters of New England Landscape Demonstration Site which is focused on accelerating restoration work.

This collaborative effort offers a historic opportunity to improve access to nearly 1,000 miles of river and tributary habitat for fish, including the endangered Atlantic salmon, shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic sturgeon, and American shad, alewife, striped bass, and blueback herring.

Partners

Penobscot Indian Nation
 State of Maine
 Penobscot River Restoration Trust
 -American Rivers
 -Atlantic Salmon Federation
 -Trout Unlimited
 -Natural Resource Council of Maine
 -The Nature Conservancy
 -Maine Audubon
 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
 Maine Sea Grant



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

For more information contact: Matthew Bernier, NOAA Fisheries, Maine Field Station, 17 Godfrey Drive, Suite 1, Orono, ME 04473; 207-866-7409

Focus Area Objectives At a Glance

3-5 years

Sea-Run Fish – Identify priority areas for fish passage to increase access to habitat

Prey Species – Remove dams or construct fishways to allow access to thousands of acres of spawning habitat for alewives which are food for commercially important groundfish

Atlantic Salmon – Replace culverts in coldwater habitat

Water Quality – Continue pre- and post-dam removal project monitoring

Forecasting - Provide accurate and timely river flow forecasts for river-based recreational activities

Long-term

Improve river flow and restore sea-run fish

Increase fishing and recreational activities, generating jobs and revenues for Maine communities and preserving the cultural heritage of the Penobscot Indian Nation