

# PENOBSCOT RIVER RESTORATION TRUST

## PRESS STATEMENT

### **Penobscot River Restoration Project to Boost Maine Economy, Restore Fish** *Penobscot River Restoration Trust Awarded Funds to Remove Fish Passage Barriers*

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**Contacts:** Laura Rose Day, Executive Director – 207-232-5976  
Cheryl Daigle, Outreach Coordinator/Community Liaison – 207-232-9969

Old Town and Augusta, ME: Today, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) announced that it will invest \$6.1 million through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to help rebuild the sea-run fisheries of Maine's Penobscot River. A grant to the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (the Penobscot Trust) will fund removal of the Great Works dam, a key barrier to the sea-run fish restoration, as well as scientific monitoring of the Penobscot River Restoration Project.

The Penobscot Project is an innovative public-private partnership to restore self-sustaining runs of Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, and seven other species while also maintaining hydropower generation on Maine's largest river system. The Trust will purchase three dams, remove the two closest to the sea - Veazie and Great Works – and construct a fish bypass at a third at Howland to significantly increase access to nearly 1000 miles of habitat. Great Works, which will be removed with this award, lies above Veazie and is the second dam from the sea. Removal of the Veazie dam will occur at a later date for fish management reasons.

“NOAA's decision to invest in the Penobscot Project will produce restoration-related jobs for the region now, and the natural infrastructure to support increased, more diverse economic, culture, and recreational opportunities well into the future,” stated Laura Rose Day, Executive Director of the Penobscot Trust. “This is fantastic news for the region and we are committed to working with businesses, communities, and others to ensure a smooth transition to a restored river.”

Work to deconstruct the Great Works dam, combined with pre-dam removal scientific monitoring, will yield nearly \$5 million in jobs for the region and is expected to employ nearly 155 people in restoration-related engineering and heavy construction jobs (the equivalent of 38 annualized jobs). The work, over a 24-month project period, will create jobs for construction workers, technical experts such as engineers and hydrologists, work for local businesses such as nurseries and contractors, as well as jobs related to scientific monitoring.

“In addition to the immediate jobs created by the projects, stronger and healthier coastal communities will boost our nation's long-term economic health,” Commerce under secretary of oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco said.

This federal funding reinforces the national significance of this unprecedented partnership between PPL Corporation, the Penobscot Indian Nation, seven conservation groups, and state and federal agencies. The Trust was awarded this grant through a highly competitive process that considered over 800 proposals requesting nearly \$3 billion from this \$170 million federal funding opportunity. Funding was made available by Congress in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act because of the recognition that investment in “green jobs” is both good for the economy and the environment.

As part of the project, PPL will maintain at least current levels of energy production on the river; it has already increased power generation by raising water levels and by repowering the Orono Dam. PPL will have the opportunity to reuse turbines from the decommissioned dams to increase generation at its remaining dams. PPL will also enhance fish passage at four dams, including construction of a fish elevator at Milford which will become the first dam on the river. PPL will maintain its employment levels.

The Penobscot Trust partners, with strong leadership from Maine’s Congressional Delegation, the state of Maine, NOAA Fisheries and the USFWS, have raised \$25 million in private and public funds to purchase the dams. Additional funds will still be needed to complete the restoration. The Trust will complete its purchase of dams once it has received final permits, currently under review.

Investment in projects like the Penobscot River restoration bolsters the economy and restores valuable natural resources. The return of healthy fish stocks will have multiple benefits, including providing food for fish eating birds and for commercially important fish in the Gulf of Maine such as cod and other important species. Economic and cultural benefits may include new and expanded angling, boating, and near shore recreation; new tourism opportunities; and community revitalization that can attract job-creating businesses. The project will render meaningful the Penobscot Nation’s federally recognized sustenance fishery rights and revitalize river-related cultural and spiritual practices.

American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Maine Audubon, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Penobscot Indian Nation, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited are members of the Penobscot Trust. In addition to PPL Corporation, other project partners and supporters include communities, businesses, conservation and civic organizations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, and the state of Maine (Department of Marine Resources, Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and State Planning Office).

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Address: P.O. Box 5695, Augusta, ME 04332    Ph: 207-232-9969    Fax:207-622-4343    Web: [www.penobscotriver.org](http://www.penobscotriver.org)