

# **PENOBSCOT RIVER RESTORATION TRUST**

## **The White House Requests \$10 Million from Congress to Restore the Penobscot River**

### **PRESS STATEMENT**

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(Old Town and Augusta, Maine) The Bush Administration today announced that it is requesting \$10 million dollars from Congress to restore the once-abundant sea-run fisheries of the Penobscot River in Maine, the second largest river in the Northeast. The announcement includes details of the FY2008 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) budget providing \$10 million for the Penobscot River Restoration Project. The NOAA budget includes \$38 million nationwide for protecting and restoring coastal and marine areas, including “a project to eventually restore nearly 1000 stream miles of habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and other fish species.” Funding for the Penobscot River Restoration Project includes \$8 million for dam acquisition and \$2 million to NOAA’s Office of Habitat Conservation for technical assistance, pre- and post- removal studies, and engineering.

Project partners include NOAA, the Department of the Interior, dam owner PPL Corporation, the Penobscot Indian Nation, the state of Maine, and American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, Trout Unlimited and the Penobscot River Restoration Trust.

“The White House and NOAA are indicating to Congress that the success of this innovative partnership among business, state, tribal and federal government, and citizens to restore the Penobscot River is of great national value,” said Laura Rose Day, Executive Director, Penobscot River Restoration Trust. “Together, we will restore the Penobscot River system and in doing so we will renew fisheries, wildlife, and the cultural, recreational, economic and other values that the river can offer to the people of Maine and the nation. The Trust is thrilled that the Administration and NOAA are supporting this remarkable project.”

“For more than 10,000 years, the Penobscot River has been the heart of our homeland,” said Penobscot Indian Nation Chief Kirk Francis. “Our identity as a tribe is deeply intertwined with the health of the river. The river’s restoration is critical to our cultural survival. We commend the administration for its support for this and we express our appreciation to the Maine Congressional Delegation who have been so supportive and encouraged the Administration to continue funding this project.”

“This is perhaps the most important fresh-water restoration project underway in North America,” said Michael Tetreault, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy in Maine. “The benefits of the project are far reaching for species including federally endangered shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic sturgeon, river herring, striped bass, tomcod, rainbow smelt and Atlantic salmon. In this

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region where culture, tradition, business, and recreation all depend on a thriving Penobscot, the benefits to people will be tremendous.”

Rose Day praised the “steadfast bipartisan support for the project and the continued leadership from the entire Maine delegation that has been critical to our attracting this type of significant federal commitment. Their support will make a difference to the future of this great Maine river.”

In a press release, Senator Collins called the funding inclusion in the President’s budget “excellent news that will help this extremely important project move forward.” She noted that the \$10 million in funding will provide significant federal cost-share and will help ensure improved access to nearly 1,000 miles of habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and habitat access for other fish species will be improved.

“This announcement comes on the heels of news last week that the Penobscot River Restoration Project received a \$1 million grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Wetlands Program and we are pleased with this demonstration of growing federal support for the project,” said Senator Snowe.

"NOAA's commitment to this project is great news for the Penobscot River," stated Governor Baldacci. "The benefits of this landmark conservation project to the State of Maine are far reaching. It proves that we can balance fisheries conservation with our need of hydropower."

The state has committed to seek \$3-5 million to help communities in the region reap many anticipated benefits of the restored river.

The not-for-profit Penobscot River Restoration Trust holds an option to purchase the dams for approximately \$25 million and is actively seeking acquisition funds from a combination of public and private sources. Over \$7.5 million has been raised from private sources. Maine’s Congressional Delegation has been instrumental in securing more than \$4.5 million dollars in federal funds to date. Additional support has come from a wide array of supporters, including the state of Maine, tribes, businesses, and local, state and national organizations.

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**The Penobscot River Restoration Trust (the Penobscot Trust) is a nonprofit corporation whose members include the Penobscot Indian Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited, and whose mission is to implement the Penobscot River Restoration Agreement.**