

PENOBSCOT RIVER RESTORATION TRUST

PRESS RELEASE

Fisheries Restoration, Energy Balance Closer to Becoming Reality on Penobscot River

Penobscot River Restoration Trust to Buy Three Dams from PPL Corporation

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Old Town, ME: Today, on the banks of the Penobscot River in Old Town, Maine, at 11 a.m., partners in the Penobscot River Restoration Project will announce they are taking a major step forward in this historic effort to restore Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, and seven other species of sea-run fish to nearly 1,000 miles of river habitat while ensuring energy generation is maintained on one of the country's most significant river systems. With \$25 million in private and public funds raised to purchase the Veazie, Great Works and Howland dams, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (Penobscot Trust) has announced it is moving ahead to purchase three dams from PPL Corporation (PPL), completing the initial phase and now shifting fully into the implementation phase of the Project.

“The Penobscot Trust has notified PPL that it intends to purchase the Veazie, Great Works and Howland dams, allowing project partners to move forward with this unprecedented Project to rebalance hydropower energy and create sustainable native sea-run fisheries well into the future,” stated Laura Rose Day, Executive Director of the Penobscot Trust. By exercising the option a full year before it expires, the Penobscot Trust secures a \$25 million purchase price and avoids an increase of \$1 million.

“The Penobscot Trust and its partners deeply appreciate the constructive dialogue and commitment that has come from every corner to make this extraordinary milestone possible,” remarked Rose Day. “The leadership, the generosity and the local support all inspire confidence in the future health and prosperity of the Penobscot region.”

The Penobscot Trust has initiated the permitting process, held pre-permitting meetings, and completed preliminary designs for dam removal and bypass construction. Once the permits have been approved, the two lowermost dams (Great Works and Veazie) will be removed and a fish bypass will be constructed around the third dam in Howland. The Project offers an unprecedented opportunity to restore sea-run fish to a major river system. The Project allows hydropower company PPL to maintain virtually all of the energy it produces on the river. As part of the innovative agreement, PPL has already increased power generation at three dams, and is in the process of re-powering the Orono Dam. PPL will have the opportunity to recycle turbines from the three dams that will be decommissioned to increase generation at remaining dams. PPL will also enhance fish passage at four dams, including the construction of a fish elevator at the Milford Dam, which will become the first dam on the river.

“PPL is proud to partner with Penobscot River Restoration Trust in this landmark agreement that helps restore native fish to the river and increases the amount of clean, renewable energy in New England,” says Dennis Murphy, vice president and chief operating officer of Eastern Fossil and Hydro Generation for PPL. “Through the extraordinary efforts of the Trust, this restoration project will benefit the region’s environment, economy and social heritage.”

The Project will allow the return of river herring, Atlantic salmon, American shad and seven additional species of migratory fish to the largest river in Maine. Return of healthy fish stocks will have multiple benefits, including food for fish eating birds such as eagles, ospreys, and herons and for predatory fish in the Gulf of Maine such as cod and other commercially important species. Removing the dams will convert impoundments to free-flowing river, improving water quality and increasing the diversity and abundance of aquatic insects, which are ecologically important to fish and migratory songbirds. Riverfront communities will benefit from a restored river with healthy fisheries, improved community and economic opportunities, enhanced angling and paddling, revival of culture and tradition, and a renewed connection to the river.

"The Penobscot people and the river have shared this place for thousands of years, and the health of our people is directly tied to the health of this river. Opening up this waterway will revitalize a significant part of our culture and bring back health to our sacred river," said Chief Kirk Francis of the Penobscot Indian Nation. "We are so grateful to all the people who are helping to make this project a reality."

Project partners completed a successful \$10 million private capital campaign and with strong leadership from Maine’s Congressional Delegation along with NOAA Fisheries and the USFWS were successful in securing \$15 million in federal funds for the project. With the \$25 million committed to buy the dams, the Trust has been working diligently to complete the environmental and engineering studies and public forums necessary to secure the permits needed to take final ownership of and to remove the dams. In this second phase of the project, the Trust will need to raise approximately \$25-30 million more, which is expected to come again from a mix of public and private sources.

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 collaborators include 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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