

# PENOBSCOT PARTNERS

American Rivers ~ Atlantic Salmon Federation ~ Maine Audubon  
Natural Resources Council of Maine ~ Penobscot Indian Nation ~ Trout Unlimited

## Contacts:

- **Laura Rose Day, Penobscot Partners (207) 232-9996**
- **Lia Morris, Penobscot Partners (207) 232-9969**
- **Judy Berk, Penobscot Partners, press liaison (207) 622-3101 ext. 203**
- **John Banks, Penobscot Indian Nation (207) 817-7330**

**EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE FRIDAY JUNE 25 AT NOON**

For more information about the Penobscot River Restoration Project see [www.penobscotriver.org](http://www.penobscotriver.org).

## **Penobscot River Restoration Project Passes Major Milestone**

### *Final Agreement -- Roadmap to Restored Penobscot River -- Filed with FERC*

**Veazie, Maine** – Today, on the banks of the Penobscot River, Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton and Governor John Baldacci, were joined by leaders from PPL Corporation, the Penobscot Indian Nation and Penobscot Partners to announce a major milestone for the Penobscot River Restoration Project. Overlooking the Veazie Dam and the Veazie Salmon Club, the parties signed the final agreement – laying out a roadmap for restoring the Penobscot’s once magnificent migratory fisheries while also maintaining hydropower production. The agreement was officially filed with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) following the noon signing at Veazie. FERC has the principal regulatory oversight responsibilities for hydropower dams.

“This is a terrific accomplishment,” said Governor John Baldacci, whose administration has been extensively involved in the Penobscot River Restoration Project. “I’m very encouraged by the strong support for the project that has been building within the watershed and from people throughout Maine and the country as a whole who are excited about improving the health of the Penobscot River while also enhancing its economic benefits to the state. Maine’s Congressional delegation has also recognized the tremendous potential this project offers not only to the communities along the river but to the state as a whole.”

“Today, we celebrate the leadership, innovation and commitment that have brought us to the brink of the nation’s most significant river restoration project. We reaffirm our commitment to work with people of the region as we go forward,” said Laura Rose Day, director for Penobscot Partners, a coalition of conservation groups and the Penobscot Indian Nation. “Our collective challenge now is to raise the funds necessary to implement the project – an investment sure to produce unprecedented benefits.”

“This is by far the most important natural resource project the Penobscot Nation has been involved with. Reconnecting the Penobscot River and our reservation to the Atlantic Ocean repairs an important cycle of nature that historically allowed our tribe to survive and prosper,” said Chief Barry Dana of the Penobscot Indian Nation. Reestablishing this link will provide economic and ecological benefits to all people in this region of Maine.”

The Penobscot River Restoration Project aims to improve access to 500 miles of habitat within the Penobscot River watershed for the endangered Atlantic salmon and 10 other migratory fish species and a wide range of native plants and animals, while maintaining power generation through a creative combination of dam removals, enhancement of fish passage, and increased hydropower generation at facilities currently owned by PPL Corporation. The project was announced on October 6<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at a press conference on the banks of the Penobscot in Old Town, Maine. The initial agreement for the project was made public at that time, although the legal documents that would guide the project were yet to be finalized.

Under this unprecedented and innovative river restoration project:

- PPL Corporation has the opportunity to increase generation at six existing dams, which would result in more than 90% of the current energy generation being maintained;
- The Penobscot River Restoration Trust has the option to purchase three dams, and subsequently remove the two lowermost dams on the Penobscot: Veazie and Great Works;
- The Penobscot River Restoration Trust, after obtaining the approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will decommission and pursue a state-of-the-art fish bypass around the third dam, Howland dam, that will, if found feasible, maintain the impoundment; and
- PPL Corporation will improve fish passage at four additional dams.

The final agreement filed today with FERC will guide the sale of the three dams and the regulatory filings required for completion of this project. The agreement was signed by PPL Corporation; the U.S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the National Park Service; four State of Maine natural resource agencies; the Penobscot Indian Nation; American Rivers; the Atlantic Salmon Federation; Maine Audubon; the Natural Resources Council of Maine; Trout Unlimited; and the Penobscot River Restoration Trust – a non-profit corporation established in May 2004 to purchase the dams.

The Penobscot River Restoration Trust has a five-year option period, during which it will need to meet the challenge of raising the approximately \$25 million needed to purchase the dams from PPL Corporation. Funds will be sought from a combination of public and private sources. None of the three dams that will be purchased as part of the option agreement will be altered or removed until sometime between 2006-2010, although portions of the agreed upon generation increases will be implemented on a shorter timeline. The filing of this agreement with FERC also signifies the beginning of the federal and state regulatory process for the project, during which the public will have multiple opportunities to comment.

This year the National Academy of Sciences issued a report that said the highest priority for restoring endangered Atlantic salmon is dam removal. The report went on to say "the recent agreement to remove two Penobscot River dams is encouraging."

Since the Penobscot River Restoration Project was announced in October of 2003 representatives from the project have met with city and town officials, citizens, and groups throughout the watershed to share information and discuss issues of concern. These have included meetings with town officials and citizens in Orono, Howland, Veazie, Brewer, Bangor, Eddington, and Bradley. Penobscot Partners has also begun to work with riverfront towns, businesspeople and economic and community development organizations, including Eastern Maine Development Corporation, about the opportunities that this project will present. These discussions have laid a foundation for a collaborative effort as the economic and community development portion of this project moves forward.

In addition, Penobscot Partners have hired Steve Levesque, President of SHL Enterprise Solutions and the former Commissioner of the Department of Community and Economic Development for the State of Maine, as a consultant on community and economic development matters.