



# Natural Resources Council of Maine

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**Statement by  
Brownie Carson  
Executive Director  
Natural Resources Council of Maine  
August 21, 2008**

Today we are celebrating a big step forward for one of the most significant watershed restoration projects in U.S. history.

As we stand here today on the banks of the Penobscot River, we can feel the power of history in the making. This is truly a watershed moment – when we move from the *concept* of the Penobscot River Restoration Project, to the *reality* of this remarkable undertaking.

Our decision to purchase these dams means that the Penobscot will be a healthier river in the future. By rebalancing ecological function and power generation in Maine's largest watershed, we will create benefits for nature and communities along this river for generations to come

NRCM has been a proud member in the partnership that had enabled us to reach today's important milestone.

We were there at the initial negotiating table in 2001 when discussions with Pennsylvania Power & Light first explored “out of the box” approaches to resolving conflicts over hydropower and fish passage in the lower Penobscot River.

And we have been there every step of the way since, as support for this project has grown and expanded and created the momentum needed to make this project a success.

Today represents a tribute to the power of good ideas, and the importance of leadership. This project could never have happened without the leadership it has received from our congressional delegation; Governor Baldacci and former Governor Angus King; state and federal agencies; the Penobscot Indian Nation; our colleagues within the conservation community; local elected officials, residents along the river, and project champions and financial supporters – both here in Maine and across the nation.

This project has been identified as the single most important action that humans can take to help recover endangered wild Atlantic salmon in the United States. The river behind us once supported millions of native sea-run fish of nearly a dozen species, including annual spawning runs of wild salmon that numbered between 70,000 and 100,000 fish. Those runs have been decimated, but this year we have seen one of the healthiest returns of Atlantic salmon in some time.

I would like to believe that the returning salmon are sending us a message: that they approve of our actions and are ready to do their job, if we do ours. We have a lot of work still ahead, but we will complete this project. And I am confident that when we do, the fish will return. As they have on the Kennebec River after removal of the Edwards dam in 1999, they will do so on the Penobscot, and that will be the true significance of our collective efforts. Thank you, to everyone who has helped us reach this day.

**Protecting the Nature of Maine**

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