

July 28

Our View: Dam removal tells new chapter in Maine history

Throughout history, Maine has always relied on its rivers, and that will not change now.

The history of Maine is told by its rivers. For native people they were the source of food and transportation. For European shipbuilders, they were the highways into a trackless forest.

For a century they provided the power that drove industries providing paper, shoes and textiles to the world and jobs at home.

Now Maine's rivers are entering a new phase, and it will draw on parts of all of that history.

Last week an excavator ripped down the historic Veazie Dam in Eddington, part of the nation's most ambitious river reclamation project. This will allow millions of fish -- alewife, herring and salmon -- to make their way up the Penobscot River to spawning grounds in interior lakes and streams.

This will allow native species to return to natural habitat, as well as provide sustenance to native people who still live along the river's banks. And returning the river to its natural state will create opportunities for sport fishing, ecotourism and adventure sports like white-water kayaking.

And importantly, the river will remain a source of renewable power. Modern generating technology will continue to produce just as much electricity as the old dams did, without blocking the river to fish migrations.

This is an example of sound environmental policy that also promotes economic gains. There is no need to choose between animal habitat and jobs: Managed correctly, our environment can accommodate both.

The Penobscot River reclamation project is a shining example of how people can work together for the common good.

It is also a window into what Maine may look like in the next chapter of its history, told once again by one of its great rivers.

http://www.pressherald.com/opinion/dam-removal-tells-new-chapter-in-maine-history_2013-07-28.html