

## **RECREATIONAL AND ECONOMIC BENEFITS Of Edwards Dam Removal**

*“I see the removal of the dam and the resulting Capital Riverfront Improvement District as a catalyst for the rehabilitation and restoration of the downtown and northern end of Augusta.”*  
*Delaine Nye, citizen appointee by Governor King to the Capital Riverfront Improvement District.*

### **Recreational Opportunities Abound**

***Boaters and anglers have returned*** to the area in large numbers. Prior to removal of the Edwards Dam, access to the Kennebec River from Waterville to Augusta was difficult and slow without a sizeable motorboat. Today, kayakers and canoeists can select any number of day-long canoe trips along the river, from Waterville to Sidney, Sidney to Augusta or Waterville to Augusta.

***Riverbanks have fully revegetated, creating new shoreline habitat and increased habitat diversity.*** Before the Edwards Dam was removed, many people feared that muddy banks, exposed by lower water levels after the dam removal, would be unsightly and deter recreational use. Instead, the exposed river banks have grown back quickly and vigorously, creating new and varied habitat for native plants, birds, insects and animals.

***Natural water levels have allowed the rapids, riffles and gravel bar islands of the Kennebec to re-establish themselves.*** These scenic, submerged for 162 years by the Edwards Dam, provide beauty and variety for river visitors and critical habitat for fish, birds, insects and plants.

### **Communities Being Reborn Along the River**

***Augusta's Capital Riverfront Improvement District (CRID)*** is using the removal of the Edwards Dam as the keystone of its efforts to revitalize Augusta's downtown core. The District's legislative purpose is to “protect the scenic character of the Kennebec River corridor while providing continued public access and an opportunity for community and economic development ...” With funding and leadership from the August CRID, the Kennebec River waterfront is being cleaned and beautified, underutilized buildings are being renovated and converted into housing and commercial space, and the Edwards Mill Park is now on its way to completion.

***The Edwards Mill Park is now a reality.*** Since removal of the Edwards Dam and the clearing of industrial debris from the Edwards mill site, the 17 acre riverfront parcel occupied by the former Edwards textile mill and dam has been converted to a highly used park, which features a summer carnival, a weekly farmers' market, a new canoe and kayak launch, and a wooded,

riverfront nature trail. The City of Augusta's recent acquisition of 90 acres of land along Bond Brook, which joins the Kennebec at the Edwards Mill Park, is the centerpiece of a new effort to create hiking and skiing trails that connect Bond Brook to the Kennebec River and the Kennebec River rail trail from Augusta to Gardiner.

***Kennebec River communities are restoring their downtown riverfronts.***

Since the Edwards Dam removal, the cities of Hallowell, Gardiner and Waterville have also begun major efforts to revitalize and renovate the Kennebec River waterfront in their communities.

***Riverfront Community Development Bond***

In November 2007 Maine voters approved funding for the \$5 Million Riverfront Community Development Bond, which provides matching funds to help Maine's riverfront communities revitalize their underutilized riverfront areas – many of which harbor idle factory buildings or empty lots which can be renewed as attractive downtown housing and shopping areas, and community green space along the rivers.

***Benton Alewife Harvest***

The town of Benton has reasserted its historic right to harvest alewives – a right that had been meaningless for over 150 years. With the removal of the Fort Halifax Dam in Winslow last summer, alewives were allowed into the Sabasticook, a tributary of the Kennebec, for the first time since the early 1800s. The town of Benton, on the Sabasticook, still holds a historic right to harvest alewives. The town decided to exercise its right, and contracted the alewife harvest out to a commercial harvester for a fee this year. The alewife harvest employed several people, generated funds for the town, and much of the harvest was sold to lobsterman for bait.

Likewise, alewives were also harvested on Vassalboro's Webber Pond this year for the first time in centuries.