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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Photography Exhibit Celebrates Penobscot River Restoration**  
*The story of the Penobscot River Restoration Project  
through the eyes of Maine photographers*

Fields Pond Audubon Center will be hosting a photography exhibit **Freeing a River: Maine Photographers Tell the Story of the Penobscot River Restoration Project** throughout the months of January and February.

Last fall, twelve Maine photographers from Port Clyde to Milford and beyond came together with the Penobscot River Restoration Trust in a community-based workshop, *People in Nature: Conservation Photojournalism*, led by environmental photographer Bridget Besaw. During the two weeks between workshop dates, participants explored the Penobscot River using their cameras and professional tips offered by Bridget to document personal topics of interest related to the many benefits expected from successful completion of the Penobscot River Restoration Project.

The Penobscot Project is an innovative public-private partnership to restore self-sustaining runs of Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, and seven other species while also maintaining hydropower generation on Maine's largest river system. Maine Audubon is a member of the Penobscot Trust and a partner in the project. In 2010, the Penobscot Trust completed purchase of three dams; the two closest to the sea - Veazie and Great Works – will be removed and a fish bypass will be constructed at Howland to significantly increase access to nearly 1000 miles of habitat.

In this new exhibit, participants help tell the story of the Penobscot Project and the benefits of restoring a free-flowing river through their photographs. Their work focuses on how riverfront communities will benefit from a restored river with healthy fisheries, new community and economic opportunities, enhanced angling and paddling, revival of culture and tradition, and a renewed connection to the river.

“Working with the Penobscot Trust and Bridget Besaw on this project was a tremendous privilege. It was wonderful to see the work and hear the words of the other participants, as we all delved into our own niches and explored the larger story of the Penobscot River restoration,” said Rich Bard, a resident of East Machias and a state wildlife biologist who enjoys photography in his free time. “I hope the collection of our work conveys to the audience the power of individual people to come

together and affect something as large as the Penobscot River.” Bard followed fisheries biologists on a survey of salmon parr to highlight the upper watershed habitat needed in Maine for salmon survival.

Return of healthy fish stocks will have many 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 and restoring sections of free-flowing river will also improve water quality and increase the diversity and abundance of aquatic insects, which are ecologically important to fish and migratory songbirds.

"The Penobscot River photojournalism workshop was an exciting opportunity to add skills while documenting this critical environmental effort to preserve the fisheries of the Penobscot River and Bay," said Len Clarke, a photographer from Port Clyde. "More than that, this project has been a fun and rewarding opportunity to learn about the Community Sustainable Fisheries here in Port Clyde and the ways that the Penobscot dam removal will benefit commercial fisheries locally."

“By the time I had presented a portfolio of images to the class, I would be able to picture in my head the Great Works and Veazie dams, the notched boulder at the Penobscot Salmon Club, the faces of the people I had met along the way. I could name the birds that fly along the river banks," said workshop participant Lea Ramirez, who spent a day with University of Maine researcher Erynn Call on a bird monitoring survey. "The Penobscot came alive for me, and it also came alive for the people in my social circle as I talked with them about the restoration project and my photography."

Join the staff of Fields Pond Audubon Center and the Penobscot River Restoration Trust in welcoming the photographers and their work at a reception on Tuesday, January 24th at 5pm at the nature center in Holden. Please call 989-2591 with any questions.

***ABOUT FIELDS POND AUDUBON CENTER:*** Just seven miles southeast of Bangor, Maine Audubon's Fields Pond Audubon Center features a modern visitor center, an 85-acre pond, and a 192-acre sanctuary with trails winding through field, wetland, forest, and lakeshore habitats—ideal for wildlife-watching, walking, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. The center offers year-round public programs for children and adults and a Maine Audubon Nature Store.

***MAINE AUDUBON*** works to protect Maine’s wildlife and wildlife habitat by engaging people of all ages in education, conservation and action. With more than a 160-year history of connecting people with nature, Maine Audubon is the only organization in Maine working to conserve wildlife in three ways: providing hands-on environmental education for people of all ages, conducting research and wildlife conservation projects statewide, and taking action to help shape effective science-based conservation policy.