

News from the Penobscot Partners

A coalition of the Penobscot Indian Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Audubon and Trout Unlimited

Senators Snowe, Collins Secure \$1million for Penobscot River Restoration

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: December 9, 2004

Contact: Lia Morris, Penobscot Partners (207) 622-3101 ext 295

Washington, DC; Old Town and Augusta ME-- Conservationists and the Penobscot Indian Nation applaud the success of Senators Olympia J. Snowe and Susan Collins (both R-Maine) for obtaining \$991,700 to assist with the Penobscot River Restoration Project. The senators fought successfully to include these funds in the federal omnibus appropriations bill that was signed by President Bush on Wednesday, December 8.

The funds are in the budget for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and represent an important step in obtaining the funds needed to implement this widely hailed and ecologically significant river restoration project that will improve access to more than 500 miles of river habitat for Atlantic salmon and 10 native fish species, while maintaining hydropower production on the river.

“We’re grateful for these funds and committed to working with the Senators and federal fisheries officials to use these funds to best achieve the goals of this river restoration,” said Laura Rose Day, director for Penobscot Partners. “The purchase of the dams is the centerpiece of the agreement, so funding to purchase the dams is the projects most pressing need.”

“The efforts of our senators and their support for this project are very much appreciated by the Penobscot Nation,” said Penobscot Nation Tribal Chief Jim Sappier. “Restoration of the native fisheries to the Penobscot River has just moved one step closer to becoming a reality, and we are extremely grateful for that.”

“The Penobscot River Restoration Project is yet another shining example of dam removal to restore Atlantic salmon to Maine waters through consensus rather than litigation,” said Senator Olympia Snowe. “Working together with the dams’ owners, PPL, and federal, state and local officials, the Coalition, made up of private non-profit conservation organizations along with the Penobscot Indian Nation, have assured that the ecologically important Penobscot River will run freer and provide more habitat for at least 10 species of fish. I look forward to assisting the Coalition in bringing this significant conservation and economic development project to its completion in the years ahead.”

“The effort to improve the Penobscot, a river that flows through the heart of our state, represents an effort to restore a portion of our heritage,” said Senator Susan Collins. “This river plays a vital role in the lives of countless individuals including the Penobscot Nation, Maine’s sportsmen, and the communities that reside on the banks of this river. I am pleased that we were successful in securing funds for this project so it might move forward to the benefit of the State of Maine.”

“We also would like to recognize the strong efforts that Representatives Allen and Michaud made to support federal appropriations for the project, and we look forward to working with them in the coming year to build stronger support for the project in the U.S. House of Representatives,” said Laura Rose Day.

The agreement to restore the Penobscot River includes the purchase, decommissioning and removal of the Veazie and Great Works dams which will allow migratory salmon, shad, striped bass, and other fish to move freely up and downstream and increase the abundance and diversity of wildlife in improved river habitat. The agreement also calls for the purchase and decommissioning of the Howland dam, and proposes the construction of an innovative fish bypass to allow sea-run fish to swim around the dam. The Penobscot River Restoration Trust currently has less than five years to raise the money and purchase the dams. The three dams will be purchased from PPL Corporation for approximately \$25 million, and another \$25 million will be needed over the next 8-10 years for implementation costs such as dam removal, fish bypass construction, fish restoration, economic development and mitigation.

###