



Penobscot River Restoration Project and the Natural Resources Council of Maine

July 22, 2013, will go down in history, as [the Veazie Dam on Maine's Penobscot River is breached](#), connecting the river to the sea for the first time in nearly two centuries as part of what may be the largest dam removal river restoration project in the nation. Veazie is the dam closest to the sea in Maine's largest river.

For more than fifty years, NRCM has led efforts to protect and restore thousands of miles of Maine's rivers, for the benefit of people, fish, and wildlife throughout the Gulf of Maine.

Since 2000, NRCM has played a central role in opening the [Penobscot River](#) to improve access to 1,000 miles of habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and ten other species of native sea-run fish that feed Maine communities, wildlife, and the Gulf of Maine.

In 1999, Laura Rose Day served as watershed project director for the Natural Resources Council of Maine. Working with the Penobscot Indian Nation and other conservation groups, during three long years of negotiations with the hydro developer, the Penobscot River Restoration Project was born.

NRCM is a founding member of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust and NRCM scientist, Nick Bennett, currently serves as a board member. The Trust successfully removed [the Great Works Dam](#) in June 2012 as part of the project to restore fisheries, cultural, economic, recreational, and wildlife benefits, while maintaining or even increasing hydropower generation on the river. The next significant milestone on the Penobscot River begins July 22, 2013, [with the breaching of the Veazie Dam](#).

In the 1990s, NRCM was instrumental in opening up the [Kennebec River](#), and later its tributary, [the Sebasticook](#), which is now home to the largest alewife run on the eastern seaboard – approximately 3 million fish annually. These magnificent waterways are now experiencing the return of Bald Eagles, Osprey, and other wildlife.

On June 5, 2013, NRCM celebrated the return of alewives as they regained access to their native habitat in [the St. Croix River](#) watershed beyond Grand Falls Dam, for the first time in 22 years. Since 2001, NRCM has worked with the Passamaquoddy people, federal officials, legislators, scientists, lobstermen and fishermen, conservationists, and others, to open the St. Croix watershed to alewives for the benefit of people, fish, and wildlife throughout the Gulf of Maine.

NRCM has advocated in the Maine Legislature, before the International Joint Commission, and elsewhere, to allow passage for alewives into the St. Croix. The success of these efforts, combined with opening of the Penobscot, may lead to the largest alewife run in the United States, supplying sustenance to the Passamaquoddy tribes, bait for lobster fishermen, food for fish and wildlife, and a chance for revival of the Gulf of Maine ground fisheries.