

# Environmental Benefits of Edwards Dam Removal

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"The thing about the Kennebec is that it's so diverse. We saw uncountable numbers of brown trout, we caught alewives, as many small mouth bass as we wanted and an unbelievable number of stripers. We also saw eagles and osprey. With its gravel bars, ledges and waterfalls, the river is beautiful." - *Bob Dionne, Aardvark Outfitters*

## Migratory Fish are Returning

- Alewives have returned to Waterville and Winslow, 18 miles upstream from the former Edwards Dam. State fisheries biologists estimate the number of alewives below Waterville to be nearly two million.
- Striped bass, an angler's favorite, known in Maine to reach up to 67 pounds, were caught in Waterville in fall, 1999 and returned again in the spring of 2000.
- American shad have been caught in Waterville in spring 2000, another first. Shad will be trapped and trucked to a hatchery in Maine, which is working to maximize shad production for release back into the river. Young shad will be released into the river to help restore the species to historic levels.
- Atlantic sturgeon and Atlantic salmon have been reported above Edwards.

## Wildlife Benefits

- Bald eagles, osprey, blue herons, kingfishers and cormorants all will benefit from improved fisheries and can easily be seen catching fish along the river.
- Alewife floaters, a fresh water mussel, instinctively sense when alewives are passing and release their spawn that the alewives carry up river attached to their gills.

## Water Quality Has Significantly Improved

- Water quality improves dramatically. Before Edwards Dam was removed, the impoundment could not meet minimum water quality standards and could not begin to support a healthy river ecosystem. Just months after the removal of Edwards dam, state scientists documented a dramatic improvement in water quality. The river has been officially upgraded to class B to reflect the improvement in river health.

- Fish and Anglers alike will welcome the dramatic increase in mayflies and stoneflies. Mayflies and stoneflies, rarely seen in samples before the removal of Edwards, have dramatically increased in numbers.

### **Recreational and Economic Benefits**

"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. Last summer the newly restored river was used extensively by the public to fish, canoe, birdwatch, and generally enjoy the river.
- Riverbanks are greening with native grasses, shrubs and other vegetation. Many people feared that muddy banks, exposed by lower water levels after the dam removal, would be unsightly and deter recreational use. Instead, vegetation grew back on the banks quite rapidly.
- More natural water levels have revealed rapids, such as Six-Mile Falls, and many small islands have reappeared. These features, newly exposed after 162 years, create an interesting and varied trip down the Kennebec River.

### **Communities and Businesses are Being Reborn Along With the River**

- In Augusta, the Capital Riverfront Improvement District, formed by legislation, will "protect the scenic character of the Kennebec River corridor while providing continued public access and an opportunity for community and economic development..."
- Plans for a park where Edwards mill once stood are well under way. Current proposals envision the Edwards mill site as a passive recreational park.
- Kennebec communities are planning new river celebrations and renewing old ones. The Whatever Celebration in Augusta includes a special celebration on the reborn river this year. "To help share in the celebration of the opening of the Kennebec we would like to invite you to canoe or kayak with us on July 2nd from Fort Halifax to Fort Western," said Fort Western's Director Jay Adams.
- Guide services and local businesses are looking forward to a good year on the river. Bob Dionne, Aardvark Outfitters noted, "Last year I said we'd see 30 drift boats working there in the next five years - I'd say now it's going to be double that. No matter how optimistic initial economic predictions were, we're going to surpass them."