

Penobscot River Restoration Project

Fact Sheet

The Penobscot River Restoration Project (PRRP), widely acclaimed as one of the nation's most innovative restoration projects in history, is an unprecedented collaborative effort between dam owner PPL Corporation; federal, state, and tribal governments; and conservation groups to restore native sea-run fish and their habitat while balancing the need for hydropower production.

THE PLAN

As a model for cooperative conservation, the Penobscot Agreement promises to revitalize fisheries, wildlife, and local communities in Maine's largest watershed. The far reaching benefits of the Project are numerous: restoration of 11 species of native sea-run fish, and native plant and animal communities; a cleaner river; revitalization of the Penobscot Indian Nation's culture and traditions; and, for migratory fish, significantly increased access to 500 miles of river habitat. Implementation is expected to stimulate economic and community development in riverside communities and enhance opportunities for traditional outdoor recreation. The Multi-Party Agreement resolves a number of longstanding issues and avoids future uncertainties over the regulation of the river. It provides PPL Corporation with the opportunity to virtually maintain current hydropower production while remaining committed to the local economy.

In June 2004, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (PRRT) signed the Lower Penobscot River Multi-Party Settlement Agreement (the Agreement), a collaborative, far-reaching blueprint for a win-win, public-private effort to restore the Penobscot River. Key components of the Agreement are:

- The Trust receives an option to purchase three dams from PPL Corporation and subsequently remove the two most seaward dams—Veazie and Great Works;
- The Trust will pursue a state-of-the-art fish bypass around the third, Howland, if found feasible by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- PPL Corporation receives the option to increase generation at six existing dams, which would result in maintaining nearly all the current energy generation;
- PPL Corporation, with the approval of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will improve fish passage at four additional dams; and
- Communities will have the opportunity to provide input, ideas, and support.

TODAY'S ENERGY INCREASES

Today, as we witness Atlantic salmon and other sea-run fish begin their remarkable journeys upstream to spawn, the parties to the Agreement acknowledge an important early step in realizing the myriad of benefits that will result from complete implementation of this historic restoration—Phase I energy increases approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

With implementation of Phase I, PPL has increased energy production at the West Enfield, Medway, and Stillwater dams. As a result, PPL has increased their annual generation capacity to produce an additional 10,000 MW-hours of renewable electricity this year. A total increase of up to 25,751 megawatt hours has been approved over the next 4-6 years. Ultimately, the project allows PPL to maintain 96% of existing generation by:

- Adding an additional foot on three impoundments;
- Recycling turbines to increase generation at four of the remaining dams; and
- Re-powering the Orono Dam.

After dams are removed for fish restoration, the annual generation on the river is anticipated to remain about what it is today after enhancements take place, notwithstanding yearly fluctuations due to variability in water availability, maintenance, and other factors.

Penobscot River Restoration Project

PROJECT BENEFITS

The Penobscot River and its tributaries roll from near Mount Katahdin in the North Woods through the heart of Maine and out into Penobscot Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. It is Maine's largest river, draining 8,570 square miles or about 1/3 of the state of Maine, and the second largest in New England. Whether delivering critical ecological benefits or stories and traditions, the river is a valuable connection between land, fresh-water and sea.

The river is ancestral home to the Penobscot Indians and has supported the livelihood and tradition of riverside communities and their residents for centuries. Members of the Penobscot Indian Nation look forward to a free-flowing river that will re-connect their homeland to the Atlantic Ocean—an important migration and trade route. An unbroken river will also bring sea-run fish to the nation, making consumption safer and revitalizing opportunities for historic tradition. A restored river will help to strengthen and reinforce the Tribe's cultural heritage and identity.

Ecosystem and wildlife benefits abound. Endangered Atlantic salmon, American shad, alewives, blueback herring, and seven other species of migratory fish are expected to rebound, fueling large-scale restoration of the Penobscot ecosystem and benefiting its diverse wildlife. Successful implementation of the project will significantly increase access to more than 500 miles of historic habitat for the first time in nearly two centuries. For species such as Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon (endangered), striped bass and rainbow smelt, restoration of the Penobscot will recover 100% of their historic range.

With benefits that extend to the whole ecosystem, as well as the Gulf of Maine, the Penobscot River Restoration Project goes far beyond restoring migratory fish. Sizeable populations of native fish will provide dependable feeding opportunities for aquatic birds and mammals such as kingfishers, river otters, osprey, and bald eagles. Waterfowl, such as the Barrows goldeneye, will find plenty of winter food in newly open waters; and restored habitats will spur population growth among aquatic insects, mussels, amphibians, and turtles. Birds of prey will benefit from an increase in uncontaminated nutrients from the ocean. Over time, the increase in historic herring biomass (alewife, blueback and shad) could help to restore a vital link between the Gulf of Maine and the Penobscot River—the largest input of freshwater to the Gulf.

Recreational fishing opportunities will return and expand. Changes in the nature of the river below Milford Dam will create new canoeing and kayaking opportunities, including “new” whitewater rapids in Howland, Old Town, and Veazie. A downriver trip from Old Town all the way to Penobscot Bay will be possible without portages around dams. Wildlife viewing should be improved due to increased species diversity associated with free-flowing river segments, and angling opportunities will diversify over time.

A restored river will revitalize economies and create valuable new opportunities for community development. Annual festivals in communities along the river will be well-attended if there are new occasions to enjoy and explore the river; new and diverse opportunities for outdoor recreation will create jobs and attract visitors; and natural river flows will inspire riverfront and other community-wide activities.

The project's origins go back to when PPL Corporation purchased these dams in 1999. The company, along with the U.S. Department of Interior, the Penobscot Indian Nation, the State of Maine, and conservation groups, decided to explore the development of a comprehensive solution to a large number of issues involving hydropower relicensing, migratory fish passage and ecological restoration on the Penobscot River. This commitment formed the basis for the Penobscot River Restoration Project, which led to this vision of river restoration.

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NEXT STEPS

To accomplish the goals set forth in this historic agreement, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust** must secure approximately \$60 million in funding from both private and public sources. The first \$24 million - \$26 million (depending upon year of exercise) will be used for dam acquisition and must be secured within the five year option period that began when the Agreement was signed in June 2004. The additional funds are needed for dam removal and other implementation costs. The Trust is actively engaged in securing this support and momentum remains strong.

The Penobscot River Restoration Project will happen gradually over several years. Once the dams are purchased and the necessary regulatory approvals are acquired, likely between 2006 and 2010, the dams will be decommissioned and removed or altered. Additional energy enhancements and fish passage improvements will complete project implementation. Other activities include additional changes in energy operations and re-licensing requirements, building support from communities within the project area and the public in general, planning for economic and community development activities related to the river's restoration, and private and public fundraising. While today's announcement builds upon significant momentum in fundraising and public support already realized, it is a single step of many in this great journey to restore the Penobscot River.

**For more information please visit:
www.penobscotriver.org**

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*** Parties to the Lower Penobscot River Settlement Agreement:** The final agreement was signed by PPL Corporation; the U.S. Department of Interior's Bureaus of Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and the National Park Service; four State of Maine natural resource agencies—the State Planning Office, the Department of Natural Resources, the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Atlantic Salmon Commission; the Penobscot Indian Nation; American Rivers; Atlantic Salmon Federation; Maine Audubon; Natural Resources Council of Maine; Trout Unlimited; and the Penobscot River Restoration Trust. Since the signing, additional parties have joined the project as funders and supporters including National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment, and The Nature Conservancy.

**** The Penobscot River Restoration Trust** is a not-for-profit corporation established in May 2004 for the purpose of implementing the core aspects of the Penobscot River Restoration Project. As outlined in the Lower Penobscot River Settlement Agreement, this includes the purchase and removal of the Veazie and Great Works Dams, and bypass or, if necessary, removal of the Howland Dam. The members of the Trust are: American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Maine Audubon, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Trout Unlimited and the Penobscot Indian Nation. Recently, the Nature Conservancy became a member of the Trust. The Trust's board of directors is comprised of a representative from each member as well as two outside directors – Fred Ayer of the Low Impact Hydropower Institute and Alan Hutchinson of the Forest Society of Maine. A third outside director will be added.