

**INSIDE!
EXPLORE
MAINE**

Near Sugarloaf, a My Maine This Week photo by Sam Horine

SPRING/SUMMER 2021

MAINE Environment

Atlantic salmon are on the brink of extinction in the U.S., and their continued existence here depends on further restoration of Maine's Kennebec River more than any other river. Four dams are blocking salmon and other sea-run fish from reaching crucial spawning and rearing habitat above Skowhegan. That is why NRCM supports further dam removals on the lower Kennebec.



Shawmut Dam, Kennebec River

Path to Progress on the Kennebec: More Dam Removals Needed

BY PETE DIDISHEIM, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF ADVOCACY

Each spring, as the water temperature warms in the Kennebec and other Maine rivers, sea-run fish make their annual migration in search of freshwater to spawn.

The Kennebec was once the most productive river in Maine for sea-run fish, supporting millions that swam more than 100 miles inland to spawn, providing food for countless wildlife and for the Wabanaki people who have lived in Maine for more than 10,000 years. It is hard to imagine the abundance and complexity of Maine's intact river ecosystems that existed before pollution decimated fish populations and dams permanently blocked access to upstream habitat, although historical records provide a clue.

A French priest in 1723 described fish ascending the Kennebec "in such numbers that a person could fill 50,000 barrels in a day, if he could endure the labor." Records of the early 1800s describe individual fishermen catching 500 salmon in a season, 6,400 shad on a single day, and 1,000 striped bass being taken in a single weir during a single tide.

Today, in sharp contrast, Atlantic salmon are struggling to survive. In the Kennebec, a gauntlet of four dams between Waterville and Skowhegan have created an impenetrable series of walls that prevent fish from reaching their historic spawning and rearing habitat in the Sandy River.

Dam Removals Help Restore Maine Rivers

Over the past 20 years, a number of harmful dams have been removed from Maine's rivers, and the results have been remarkable—placing dam removals high on the list of Maine's greatest environmental success stories. Removal of the Edwards Dam in 1999 on the Kennebec and the Ft. Halifax Dam on the Sebasticook River (a Kennebec tributary) in 2008 resulted in a stunning return of fish and wildlife to the river below Waterville. The Kennebec's run of river herring (alewives and blueback herring) is now the largest run in North America, with annual counts exceeding three million. Sturgeon now leap into the air where the Edwards Dam stood since 1837, and shad have returned in large enough numbers to support a good recreational fishery.

The people of Augusta have benefited from a large riverfront park and access to a free-flowing river, helping spur an economic revival in the city's downtown. During the spring alewife run, the Sebasticook River has among the largest concentrations of Bald

Story continued on page 2



Endangered Atlantic salmon on the Kennebec face extinction unless four dams are removed between Waterville and Skowhegan.

Atlantic Salmon Federation

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Envisioning a Future Without Waste

Maine has been a leader in adopting wide-ranging initiatives to reduce waste, most recently with laws to prohibit single-use plastic bags and foam food containers. While these are important steps to reducing plastic pollution, we also need structural changes to a system that is burdening our cities and towns with rising waste disposal costs and leading to exponential growth in plastic pollution.

NRCM's Sustainable Maine team is focusing on these two strategies this year. Sarah Nichols and Chrissy Adamowicz are leading the effort to secure passage by the Legislature of an Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging law that would save taxpayers money and improve recycling by asking big corporations to share more responsibility for recycling and disposal of packaging waste. They are also teaming up with Maine residents and the Penobscot Nation to stop Maine from being a dumping ground for out-of-state toxic waste. A loophole in Maine law allows this waste to be dumped in the State-owned Juniper Ridge landfill, causing it to fill more rapidly than it would otherwise and threatening the health of area residents and the Penobscot Nation. Most of this toxic waste comes from Massachusetts where they have banned disposal in their landfills.

It is time for big corporations to help protect Maine's recycling programs by covering the costs of recycling and disposal of the packaging materials that they produce. Out-of-state industry lobbyists flocked to Maine to testify against the packaging waste bill and even held a press conference at the State House, but with the support of thousands of Mainers behind us, we know we can win and create a healthier, more just waste and recycling system for Maine along the way.

—Colin Durrant, Advocacy Communications Director



• THE BIG PICTURE •

Reaching Out with Digital Outreach

The heart of NRCM’s mission has always been to mobilize people who care about Maine’s environment. This year, we are building on our legacy of grassroots organizing. We’re excited to introduce Kristin Jackson as our new Digital Outreach Manager. Kristin is building on our existing digital organizing work and is highly focused on finding more ways for you to participate in our advocacy work. She is already busy rolling out new features that will make it easier for all of us to take action and make our collective voices louder.



For example, Kristin is finding new tools for reaching younger and more diverse audiences. She’s in the process of launching a new database that will help us identify Mainers across the state and political spectrum who may want to get

involved in our work, like recently registered voters, potential environmental activists, and folks interested in hunting and fishing. She’s also looking at an array of options that help you speak out on issues you care about. She just unveiled a “Click-to-Call” action alert feature that will connect you directly with your lawmakers by phone. Speaking with your lawmaker personally on a phone call can be much more effective than an email.

NRCM’s commitment to digital outreach is part of our ongoing commitment to working with a wide diversity of people, in every corner of the state, who care about Maine’s environment. If you haven’t connected with us online yet, you can sign up for our action alerts at nrcm.org/take-action.

Our work together has never been more important. With the Biden Administration’s infusion of pandemic recovery funding to Maine, we have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to deal with our warming climate, transform our economy, and save the lands and waters that we love so much. Next time you get an email from us, please check out what we are asking from you and do it! Hopefully, our new digital tools will make it easier than ever. —Lisa Pohlmann, CEO

Kennebec - from Page 1

Eagles on the East Coast, and seals regularly swim upriver as far as the Benton Falls Dam to feast on alewives.

Waterville: Where Progress Ends

The story above the Lockwood Dam in Waterville is very different. The Kennebec has become a tale of two rivers, with the century-old Lockwood Dam serving as the dividing line between a healthy river below the dam, and a river where sea-run fish are excluded from passing upstream. Four dams stand in the way of further progress, and restoration for the river has been making slow but steady progress since the 1960s, when raw sewage and pollution dumped into it resulted in massive fish kills.



Removal of the Edwards Dam from the Kennebec and Ft. Halifax Dam from a tributary in Winslow has resulted in a stunning return of fish and wildlife to the river below Waterville.

Salmon runs in the Kennebec once measured in the hundreds of thousands. In 2019, only 51 salmon made it to the Lockwood Dam, where Maine’s Department of Marine Resources (DMR) must capture the fish and transport them by truck to the Sandy River. This is expensive and inefficient.

The Lockwood, Hydro-Kennebec, Shawmut, and Weston Dams, all owned by the Canadian company Brookfield, block adult Atlantic salmon from reaching critical spawning and rearing habitat in the Sandy River, a tributary of the Kennebec River. Warm temperatures and predation in the stagnant bodies of water behind the dams (called impoundments) are among the killers of young salmon (smolts) as they try to return to the ocean. The dams also harm populations of other sea-run fish species, such as river herring, that are crucial to the state’s lobster industry and to restoring healthy populations of groundfish in the Gulf of Maine.

Time is Running Out

At the beginning of 2020, the Maine Department of Marine Resources (DMR) and National Marine Fisheries Services (NMFS) both opposed Brookfield’s relicensing application for the Shawmut Dam and recommended removing it. In addition, DMR and NMFS have both told Brookfield for years that the fish lift at the Lockwood Dam does not pass either salmon or American shad effectively, but Brookfield has done nothing to fix the problem.

Brookfield’s failures demand a response, which is why NRCM, Maine Rivers, and the Conservation Law Foundation recently filed a notice of intent to sue Brookfield for violations of the Endangered Species Act for killing Atlantic salmon, a federally listed endangered species. Brookfield’s four dams generate an insignificant amount of hydroelectric power, and the damage they cause to the Kennebec’s ecosystem far outweighs their limited benefits.

Opening up the Kennebec River to its confluence with the Sandy River is the most important thing the U.S. can do to prevent the extinction of Atlantic salmon here. NRCM is determined to secure the removal of these four dams that are blocking further ecological progress on the Kennebec between Waterville and Skowhegan. These dams prevent Maine from having a tale of one Kennebec River that teems with fish runs, soaring Bald Eagles, and vibrant riverside parks and communities where people can marvel at the life of a free-flowing river.

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When Life Stopped in the Polluted Kennebec

Back in 1965, former NRCM Board President Bill Townsend, at the invitation of Senator Ed Muskie, testified about the sorry state of the Kennebec at the first field hearing of President Lyndon Johnson’s Clean Water Advisory Board. With Maine’s “industrial” rivers emerging as poster children for Congressional efforts to address water pollution, Townsend testified that “during the past week, thousands of fish have been found dead along the shores of the Kennebec River above Merrymeeting Bay.” The reason for the massive fish kill was that raw sewage and pollution had caused the dissolved oxygen content in the river to plummet to zero.

Townsend appealed to the Committee: “Possibly a fish kill like this and the steadily growing concern of the people of Maine for its natural resources will create enough public sentiment so that some action will be taken.” Seven years later, largely due to Muskie’s leadership, the Clean Water Act of 1972 was enacted and waterways nationwide, including the Kennebec, began a slow but steady clean-up process.

With improved water quality, towns started re-orienting themselves back toward the rivers. They rediscovered the waterways that once were so foul that riverfront properties were among the least desirable places in Maine to live. Cleaner water resulted in bike paths, new homes and businesses along the river, and increased real estate values. With less pollution in the rivers, fish populations began to increase, and their numbers soared when some of the most harmful of Maine’s dams were removed. (Only about 110 of Maine’s 1,000 dams generate power.) Since removal of the Edwards and Ft. Halifax Dams, more than 36 million alewives have passed through the fish lift at Benton Falls on the Sebasticook.

The late Bill Townsend loved Maine’s rivers, particularly the Kennebec. He even authored a piece for Maine Audubon’s magazine titled, “My Love Affair with the Kennebec.” If he were alive today, Bill would be a leading voice for removal of Brookfield’s four dams between Waterville and Skowhegan.—PD



Increase Your Gift's Impact— At No Cost to You!

Many companies offer matching gift programs for employees who make generous donations to nonprofits like NRCM. Does yours?

It's as simple as contacting your human resources department and asking if your company participates and if so, what to do. They will most likely direct you to fill out a form to let them know how much, where, and why you donated. They may then double, triple, or even quadruple your impact!

You will receive a notification from NRCM when matching gift payments are made and your gift impact has been extended.

In the near future, we will be able to offer an embedded search engine on our website that automatically directs you to the best contact at your company, but for now, if you are interested in making a donation but don't quite know where to start, please email Codi Riley-Havu at criley@nrcm.org.



Recovering Stronger for a Cleaner Future

2021 is quickly becoming a year of opportunity. State government agencies and the Legislature are debating the policies that will be necessary to effectively implement Maine's new Climate Action Plan. The solutions include weatherization programs that will save Mainers money, and opportunities



to develop more clean energy sources to power our economy. An influx of federal pandemic relief funding will support these efforts by allowing Maine to make critical investments in energy efficiency, broadband, wastewater facility upgrades, clean transportation solutions, state park maintenance, and much more.

This is an important and historic moment for Maine and the United States. NRCM's advocates have been working closely with the Mills Administration, state legislators, and the Congressional delegation to ensure these investments maximize benefits to Mainers and help accelerate the transition to a clean energy future. We are also advocating for a once-in-a-generation investment in infrastructure and jobs that would build on these investments by providing sorely needed upgrades to the nation's infrastructure and giving Maine the resources it needs to act on its climate goals.

If enacted by Congress, Maine would receive additional funding to eliminate lead in drinking water pipes; update stormwater systems to avoid catastrophic pollution events that close clam flats and beaches; deliver modern public transit options to more Maine people; expand affordability of electric cars and trucks; lower energy costs for homeowners and businesses; help protect our communities from the impacts of climate change; and much more.

We cannot miss this opportunity to emerge from the pandemic stronger, support local jobs, and create cleaner air and water! Please join us in urging Maine's Congressional delegation to support the President's infrastructure and jobs plan.

—Colin Durrant, Advocacy Communications Director

In Memoriam: Holmes Stockly



Ayres Holmes Stockly, who preferred to go by Holmes, died in early February of this year from natural causes, with his wife of six decades, Didi, by his side.

Born in Delaware, Holmes received a degree in architecture from Brown University and subsequently began his career in the Navy. Holmes moved to Falmouth, Maine, with his family in 1966. He quickly established an architectural practice and greatly contributed

to the rehabilitation of Greater Portland Landmarks. He held a special place in his heart for Vinalhaven Island and loved exploring the state through hiking.

Holmes became an NRCM member in 1986 and over those 35 years, we were so grateful to be able to get to know him, Didi, and their family. The loss of Holmes is deeply felt, and we extend our sympathies to his family.

Spring 2021 Tribute Gifts

IN HONOR OF:

Cathy B. Johnson from Sandy Sage and Honor Fox Sage
 Gary Louzides from Liz Louzides
 Gordon Stuart from Melissa Notz
 Gretta J. Wark from John Coffey
 Ian Ryan from Jason and Carrie Cianchette
 Kenneth DeCoster and Susan Bloomfield from Anonymous
 Lee Myrbeck from Nancy T. Richmond
 Nancy L. Gilbert from Deirdre Barton
 Natalie, Taki, and Sayo from James Lounsbury
 Pete Didisheim from Edward C. Wolf and Karen Leann McKay
 Steve and Tina True from Maggie Bruno
 Sue Ely from Dorothy Ann Kelly

IN MEMORY OF:

A. Holmes Stockly from:

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 Mr. Thomas M. Armstrong Sr.
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 Martha A. and Bob Timothy
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Ezra J. Briggs from:

Kathryn J. Olmstead
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Chuck and Pauline Civiello
 Susan S. and Carson R. Nile
 Kathryn J. Olmstead

Paul V. Crawford from:

Sue Crawford

Carrie Jenkins from:

Liberty Rebekah Lodge #94

Gilbert H. Kinney from:

Mrs. Ann R. Kinney

Deborah E. Lord from:

Cynthia and Marc Giroux
 Peter L. and Linda E. Kallin
 Margaret Lord
 David and Lisa Madara
 Lyn Suggs

Note: additional gifts in memory of Ms. Lord appeared in the Fall/Winter 2020 newsletter

William J. Powers from:

Kathy and Bob Sulin

Irma Simon from:

Jayne Winters

Nancy Smith from:

Anonymous

New at the Blog

→ **Birding with Jeff and Allison** At the monthly blog by NRCM's bird experts, Allison and Jeff Wells wrote about a visit from a rare White-winged Dove, a Great Horned Owl couple that took over the nest of an Osprey pair, and more.

→ **Critter Chatter** NRCM member-blogger Jayne Winters discusses the difference between an animal control officer and an animal damage control officer. She also recently put the spotlight on the opossum, with photos you don't want to miss!



Jayne Winters

See new blogs by NRCM staff, Rising, and special guests at www.nrcm.org/blog.

Webinar Watch

If you missed some of our webinars—or would like to see them again!—visit our YouTube channel youtube.com/user/NRCMenvironment. Recent webinars include:

→ **An Inside Look at Maine's Endangered Species** NRCM and Maine Audubon celebrated the legacy of Rachel Carson on her birthday by discussing Maine's threatened and endangered species. Carson's work inspired the nation to act to protect imperiled species including the Bald Eagle, which has since made a remarkable recovery. Learn about ongoing efforts to protect and restore imperiled Piping Plover and Canada lynx populations here in Maine, and why action is needed in Washington, D.C.

→ **Birds of Maine** A monumental publication, *Birds of Maine* is the lifework of the late ornithologist & conservationist Peter Vickery. Diagnosed with a terminal illness, Peter assembled a small team of Maine's top ornithologists as co-authors to complete the project. Peter passed away in 2017, but his life's work lives on. In this webinar, Peter's wife & co-managing editor Barbara joins Jeff Wells, Vice President of Boreal Conservation for the National Audubon Society and one of the book's co-authors, to discuss the book and the health of Maine's bird populations.

→ **Saving Atlantic Salmon on the Kennebec** The Kennebec River once supported Atlantic salmon runs in the hundreds of thousands, and runs of shad and river herring in the millions. Today, Atlantic salmon are on the brink of extinction, and four dams between Waterville and Skowhegan, owned by the international energy giant Brookfield Renewable Partners, stand in the way of a free and healthy Kennebec, blocking access to many miles of historic spawning and rearing habitat. In this webinar, you'll hear from Maine scientists, fishermen and women, and a member of Maine's tribal community about an exciting opportunity save Atlantic salmon.

2 NEW CREATURE FEATURES

Learn more about Maine wildlife on our website! NRCM member and birder Kristen Lindquist provided our latest Creature Features—Eastern Bluebird and Piping Plover!



David Small



Green Tip of the Month

MINDFUL MOWING Did you know that the EPA estimates that garden equipment, including lawn mowers, produces about 5 percent of the nation's air pollution? That's because about 54 million Americans mow their lawn every weekend, gobbling up 800 million gallons of gas each year. Space out the number of days between mows to send less pollution into Maine's air and keep more money in your pocket. And where possible, don't mow at all, allowing for more natural habitat. Given Maine's famously short summers, wouldn't you rather spend your time doing something other than mowing?



Kristen Lindquist

MY MAINE THIS WEEK

NRCM member **Kristen Lindquist of Camden, Maine**, recently wrote a Creature Feature about the Eastern Bluebird for us, and as luck would have it, her neighbor had several bluebirds visit this spring so she was able to capture beautiful images like this one to share with us. Thank you, Kristen! Read the Eastern Bluebird Creature Feature on our website at www.nrcm.org/our-maine/creature-feature/eastern-bluebird

Do you have a photograph of Maine you'd like to share? A short poem? Send your submissions to beth@nrcm.org. Visit "My Maine This Week" online at www.nrcm.org for guidelines and more photos.

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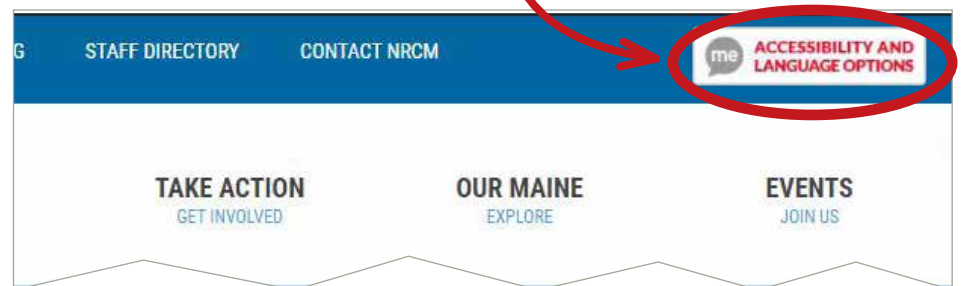
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