



July 21, 2021

Sec. Gina M. Raimondo
United States Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

I am writing on behalf of Patagonia about a critical issue to our company and our country: the fate of the Kennebec River and endangered Atlantic salmon. The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), within the U.S. Department of Commerce, has an enormously important role to play in helping restore Atlantic salmon to the Kennebec River before they edge even closer to the brink of extinction.

Historically, the Kennebec was the most productive river in Maine for migratory fish and had the largest run of Atlantic salmon in the United States. Today, that salmon run, once hundreds of thousands strong, is down to about 50 fish per year.

The Sandy River, which enters the Kennebec above Skowhegan, Maine, provides the best single piece of Atlantic salmon habitat in Maine and likely the U.S. Unfortunately, [four outdated dams between Waterville and Skowhegan owned by Brookfield Renewable Partners \(Brookfield\) are blocking salmon from reaching the Sandy River](#). These dams also block other native sea-run fish—such as shad, river herring, American eel, and sea-lamprey—from much of their historic spawning and rearing habitat.

The fate of Atlantic salmon and these other sea-run species hinges on an upcoming Endangered Species Act consultation between NMFS and Brookfield. As part of this process, we urge you and NMFS to recognize that removal of the four dams is the only option for restoring healthy populations of Atlantic salmon and other sea-run fish. The time has come to hold Brookfield accountable for its years of failure to protect endangered salmon through its operations of these four dams.

Both Governor Janet Mills and Maine's Department of Marine Resources (DMR) understand this dire situation and have recognized the need for bold action to save Atlantic salmon and other sea-run fish. The Mills Administration and DMR both support the removal of Brookfield's four dams between Waterville and Skowhegan and have encouraged Brookfield to negotiate their sale to a conservation buyer. We urge NMFS to work toward this end as well. NMFS' job under the Endangered Species Act is to protect Atlantic salmon from extinction, and its mission calls for restoration of sea-run fisheries in the Gulf of Maine. This mission will be thwarted if Brookfield continues to operate its dams on the Lower Kennebec.

Patagonia takes great pride in its environmental stewardship, and we care deeply about the health of our nation's rivers for wildlife and recreation. We were strong supporters of the Edwards Dam removal and the Penobscot dam removals in Maine that have resulted in dramatic increases in sea-run fish. Unfortunately, the amazing transformation of the Kennebec River that was made possible because of the removal of the Edwards Dam and Fort Halifax dam is now stalled by Brookfield's four dams.

Unless NMFS acts to restore a free-flowing Kennebec, we are virtually certain Atlantic salmon will vanish from Maine and the entire U.S. Removal of these four dams on the Kennebec would make it the only river in the nation where Atlantic salmon would have unimpeded access from the ocean to prime spawning and rearing habitat. We urge you to help realize this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to save an iconic endangered species from the brink of extinction.

Thank you,



Ryan Gellert
CEO, Patagonia, Inc.

cc:

Dr. Paul Doremus, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries (acting)
Michael Pentony, Regional Administrator
Governor Janet Mills
Pat Keliher, Commissioner, DMR