

Celebration lineup set for breaching of Veazie Dam



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The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved the Penobscot River Restoration Trust's request to decommission and remove the Veazie Dam in 2010. The dam will be breached on July 22. [Buy Photo](#)



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EDDINGTON, Maine — The [Penobscot River Restoration Trust](#) and its public and private partners have announced the lineup of events planned for later this month to mark the [historic breaching of the Veazie Dam](#), one of the few remaining impediments to the return of native sea-run fish to the Penobscot River.

Project proponents say that removing the dam will reconnect Maine's second-largest river with the Gulf of Maine for the first time in nearly 200 years.

Supporters of the river restoration project say that removing the century-old Veazie Dam, which spans the river from Veazie to Eddington, will help restore about 225 acres of in-stream habitat and about 65 acres of streamside habitat, while enhancing the connectivity and functional value of 188,000 acres of wetland habitats for native sea-run fish, including endangered Atlantic salmon, endangered shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon and eight other fish species.

The initial breaching and the celebration surrounding it are set for July 22 and will include events on both sides of the river, according to Laura Rose Day, executive director of the trust, which is a nonprofit organization formed to bring the river reopening to its fruition.

The landmark river restoration project is a joint effort of the Penobscot Indian Nation, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, six other nongovernmental organizations, the state of Maine, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and hydropower companies.

The [removal of Great Works Dam in Bradley](#) was the first part of the project.

Once the Veazie Dam, the lowermost barrier on the Penobscot River and the closest to the Atlantic Ocean, is removed and a dam in Howland is bypassed, sea-run fisheries will gain access to more than 1,000 miles of upstream habitat that has been closed to their predecessors for more than a century, according to Rose Day. Sargent Corp. of Stillwater has been chosen to take on the Veazie Dam removal, which could last into next summer.

The dam removal [will not result in a loss of hydro-lectric power](#) producing capacity, however. That is because two other Penobscot River dams were authorized to boost their energy capacity and fill the gap left by the demolition or decommissioning of Veazie Dam and other dams on the Penobscot.

The Department of Environmental Protection in 2011 cleared Black Bear Hydro Partners LLC, the company that owns the Stillwater and Orono dams, to build new powerhouses and turbines at both dams that will more than double their capacity.

The two dams slated for removal are the Veazie dam and the Great Works Dam in Old Town. The Penobscot River Restoration Trust purchased those dams and another in Howland with plans to put them out of service and allow fish to travel farther up the Penobscot River into more central parts of the state.

The Veazie Dam breaching celebration will begin at 10 a.m. Monday, July 22, at the dam site off Monument Drive on the Eddington side of the Penobscot River, where members of the Penobscot Indian Nation will perform traditional drumming and a sacred ceremony.

The ceremony will be followed by remarks from speakers including representatives from the Penobscot Indian Nation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the U.S. Department of Interior/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine's congressional delegation and other federal and state dignitaries. Afterward, the initial breaching of the dam will take place.

The Eddington-based events will continue with refreshments and educational exhibits from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., at which time the public will have opportunities to go on self-guided tours of six or more sites important to the project. Those include the former Great

Works Dam site, where the Penobscot now flows freely, a new fishway up at the Maine Forest and Logging Museum at Leonard's Mills in Bradley and the fishway at Blackman Stream, a tributary to the Penobscot.

Hosts will be on hand at each site to provide information, Rose Day said.

At 4 p.m., the action will move across the Penobscot to Riverview Park in Veazie, where a community barbecue, live music and family activities are planned — including a storytelling opportunity for people who want to come and talk about their history with the river, whether it involve fishing, boating or their work at the Veazie hydro station.

“It's a chance to bring older and younger generations together ... people from different walks of life who might not get together to talk about the river and what it can be in the future. We'll create a forum for everyone to talk to each other and listen to each other,” Rose Day said in an interview late last month.

The concert will feature the [Cowboy Angels](#), a Maine-based classic country band, Rose Day said.

Because parking on either side of the dam is limited, shuttles will be provided at the Eddington School from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and at Veazie Community School from 3:45 p.m. to 7:15 p.m., according to a schedule of events posted on the trust's website, www.penobscotriver.org.

For information about the Veazie Dam celebration, or to RSVP, call Penobscot River Restoration Project outreach coordinator Cheryl Daigle at 232-9969 or email Cheryl@penobscotriver.org.

<http://bangordailynews.com/2013/07/13/news/bangor/celebration-lineup-set-for-breaching-of-veazie-dam/?ref=latest>