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Great Works dam breached

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Workers reached another milestone over the weekend as the Great Works Dam in Bradley was breached.

The dam was among two that are going to be removed as part of the Penobscot River Restoration Project — a fish bypass will be built at a third — opening 1,000 miles of habitat to sea-run fish. That habitat has been closed to free-swimming fish for more than 100 years.



Work crews breached the Great Works Dam in Bradley on Saturday. Photo courtesy of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust

The Great Works Dam is the first to be breached. Its significance can't be overstated: A dam has been at that site since 1830.



The flow increases. Photo courtesy of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust.

Work on the Great Works site kicked off on June 11, with a crowd of several hundred on hand at the site and watching a video feed that was shown on Indian Island. That recognition of the start of dismantling the dam was largely ceremonial. Work did start that day, but visitors did not see water gushing downstream; instead, construction crews started work on destroying an old fishway that sits on the downstream side of Great Works.

But on Friday, the dam was breached, and water began to flow.

The Penobscot River Restoration Project has been in the works for more than a decade, and is a model of cooperation by state and federal government agencies, conservation groups and the Penobscot Nation.

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Water flows through the Great Works Dam after it was breached. Photo courtesy of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust

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