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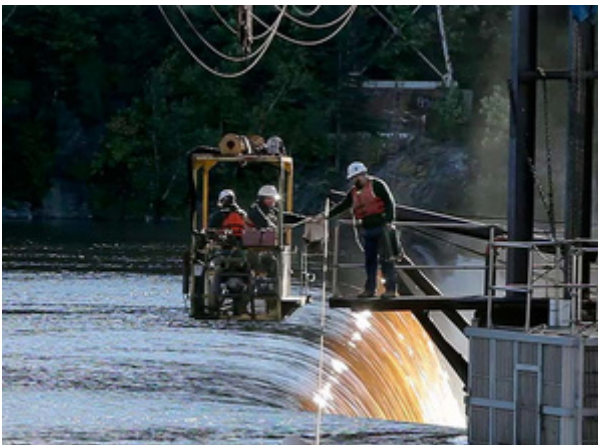
Maine nabs \$1.3 million in wetlands restoration grants

Most of the money will go toward the Penobscot River Restoration project, restoring habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and other fish.

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The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service announced \$20 million in grants Tuesday to 24 coastal wetlands projects in 13 states and territories, including two in Maine.



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In this file photo, Tyler Grant, right, and Mitch Simpson – both of the Department of Marine Resources – check for salmon atop the Veazie Dam on the Penobscot River in Veazie. Maine will remove the dam as part of the Penobscot River Restoration project.

Gregory Rec / Staff Photographer

The grants, designed to conserve and restore coastal wetlands and their fish and wildlife habitat, will be matched with \$21.3 million from state and local governments, private landowners and conservation groups.

In Maine, the Penobscot River Restoration project was awarded \$1 million to remove the Veazie Dam and restore about 225 acres of in-stream habitat and about 65 acres of streamside habitat, according to a Fish & Wildlife Service spokesman.

The dam's removal is expected to enhance 188,000 acres of wetland habitat for native sea-run fish, including endangered Atlantic salmon, shortnose and Atlantic sturgeon and eight other fish species.

The project is a joint effort between the Penobscot Indian Nation, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, six other non-governmental organizations, the state of Maine, the Department of the Interior, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and hydropower companies.

The second project funded in Maine affects White Island and Wilson's Cove in Harpswell. A total of \$425,000 -- from a grant of \$300,000 and matching funds of \$125,000 -- will go to protect more than 60 acres of coastal wetlands, about 23 acres of buffering uplands and nearly 4,000 feet of shoreline on Middle Bay within the Casco Bay Estuary.

The Fish & Wildlife Service has awarded about \$320 million since the program began in 1992. When the current projects are completed, about 298,000 acres of habitat will have been protected, restored or enhanced.

<http://www.pressherald.com/news/Maine-nabs-13-million-in-wetlands-restoration-grants.html>