

Penobscot River Restoration Trust

PENOBSCOT RIVER RESTORATION PROJECT BEGINS REMOVAL OF GREAT WORKS DAM

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, June 11, 2012

Contact: Laura Day Rose, 207-232-5976, laura@penobscotriver.org
Merritt T. Carey, 207-699-9492; event@penobscotriver.org

Old Town, Maine – On Monday, June 11, demolition of the Penobscot River’s Great Works Dam begins. This is a major step toward allowing the river to flow free from Old Town to the Gulf of Maine for the first time in generations.

For centuries, dams along the Penobscot River have blocked fish from reaching their historic spawning grounds, depleting native fish populations and diminishing fishing and recreation for Maine communities. On June 11, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, with its public and private partners, celebrates the beginning of the removal of the Great Works Dam, a one thousand foot long mass of concrete, timber and cribwork. This historic event is a key component of the innovative Penobscot River Restoration Project aimed at reviving native fish populations, cultural traditions and creating economic and recreational opportunities, while maintaining existing hydropower production along the largest river within Maine.

“Today is an important milestone for river conservation in America,” Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, who is attending the press conference, said. “Through a historic partnership that exemplifies President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, we are reconnecting 1,000 miles of river, restoring vital habitat for fish and wildlife, expanding opportunities for outdoor recreation, and supporting energy production, jobs and economic growth in communities throughout Maine.”

The decommissioning and removal of Great Works Dam, located north of Bangor, is part of a broad collaborative effort that will eventually include removal of the Veazie Dam and creation of new, upstream fish passage at Milford and Howland Dams. Once completed, the Project will vastly improve access to nearly 1,000 miles of historic fish habitat, benefitting 11 species of native sea-run fish including endangered Atlantic salmon. The entire Project will be phased over several years and will create hundreds of jobs.

The Penobscot River Restoration Project balances fisheries restoration with hydropower production; it is considered a model of collaborative partnership for accomplishing large-scale ecological restoration across the United States. Attending the Great Works Dam Removal Event on June 11, is Eric Schwaab, the Acting Assistant Secretary for Conservation and Management of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), as well as other high-level dignitaries. Said Schwaab, "NOAA has long hoped to see the Penobscot River's Atlantic salmon, herring, sturgeon and shad swim freely to their spawning grounds upstream. This will help spur the growth of these fish populations that are vital to the health of the larger Gulf of Maine ecosystem as well as the commercial and recreational fishing it supports."

The Penobscot River Restoration Project will enable the Penobscot Indian Nation to once again obtain sustenance and more fully realize cultural practices from the river that bears their name. "Today is a day that will be remembered as a most significant event in reuniting our long-lost fisheries resources with their historic homeland. Bringing back these lost relatives continues the restoration of ancient natural cycles of creation in a river we have been connected to for thousands of years, and makes us who we are as a people," said Chief Francis of the Penobscot Indian Nation.

The remarkable private-public collaboration includes hydropower companies Black Bear Hydro and PPL Corporation; the Penobscot Indian Nation; NOAA; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; American Rivers; the Atlantic Salmon Federation; Maine Audubon; Natural Resources Council of Maine; the Penobscot River Restoration Trust; The Nature Conservancy; and Trout Unlimited. Scott Hall, Vice President, Environmental & Business Services, Black Bear Hydro Partners, LLC said, "Black Bear looks forward to developing new hydropower in the Penobscot watershed as part of the Penobscot River Restoration Project's new balance between energy production and fisheries. We look forward to working together with the Penobscot River Restoration Trust and other project partners to realize both energy and fisheries benefits for Maine."

An announcement at today's press conference confirmed that this is also a celebration of the unprecedented private-public collaboration that is supporting the restoration of this mighty river. As of today, the Project is close to reaching the estimated \$62 million necessary for completion. This week alone, the momentum generated by this milestone resulted in new contributions for the Project totaling approximately \$3.8 million from foundation and private sources. Combined with generous funding throughout the project from numerous foundations, businesses and private donors, private contributions are now at \$31 million. Simultaneously, DOI and NOAA are pledging to support the Project with an additional \$3.55 million in funding that would bring the federal government's contribution to nearly \$30 million. The Penobscot River Restoration Trust is tremendously grateful for the unprecedented investment in the river by private and public supporters which further demonstrates the power of partnership.

Major funding for the Great Works Dam removal was provided by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, including funds for scientific monitoring of the Project, with additional support provided through the FWS national fish passage program and other public and private sources.

The Penobscot River is the largest river within Maine and second largest in New England. Its tributaries flow from near Mount Katahdin in the North Woods through the heart of Maine to Penobscot Bay, draining 8,570 square miles, or about a quarter of the state. The Penobscot River Restoration Project's reconfiguration of dams will have a wide range of benefits for fish and wildlife populations, water quality and communities along the river while at the same time maintaining hydropower.

"The Penobscot River Restoration Trust is pleased to join our partners in this historic moment in Maine. The benefits of the Great Works Dam removal, and the Project more generally, will be far reaching, positively affecting fisheries and related environmental ecosystems, expanding business and cultural opportunities and recreational use of the expansive Penobscot River," said Laura Rose Day, Executive Director of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust.

Completion of the project will have a positive impact on:

- **Fish restoration:** The Project will significantly improve access to 1,000 miles of upstream habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and other “upper river” species of commercial and recreational importance by removal of the Great Works and Veazie dams and installation of a fish bypass at Howland Dam. In addition, Black Bear Hydro will construct a fish lift at Milford and improve fish passage at other dams. Overall, populations of endangered Atlantic salmon, American shad, alewives, blueback herring and seven other species of migratory fish are expected to rebound. “Lower river” species, including endangered sturgeon, will regain full access to their historic river habitat.
- **Energy:** Maintaining hydroelectric power is a core element of this Project. Black Bear Hydro has invested significant resources at its hydroelectric facilities, maintaining and potentially increasing hydro power generation, while reducing the impact on migrating fish.
- **Cultural traditions:** The Penobscot has been the ancestral home to the Penobscot Indians for more than 10,000 years. Removing Great Works and Veazie dams will rejoin the Penobscot Indian Nation’s homeland with the Atlantic Ocean. A return of sea-run fish will also revitalize opportunities for culturally significant fishing and paddling traditions.
- **Recreation:** Recreational fishermen, paddlers, hikers, bird watchers and other outdoor enthusiast, will benefit from a restored river. Opportunities will improve over time due to increased species and habitat diversity. Outfitters, tour guides and other outdoor-related businesses stand to profit from increased recreational opportunities.
- **Environment and natural resources:** The increase in bio-diversity will enhance the entire Penobscot River ecosystem. As fish populations grow, bird populations will diversify because of an increasing food supply. Over time, the increase in historic herring biomass may also help restore commercial ground fisheries between the Gulf of Maine and the Penobscot.
- **Job creation and economic benefits:** The Penobscot River Restoration Project is creating or maintaining a variety of jobs for people in construction, engineering, and scientific industries while also creating new opportunities for long-term economic growth in the region. Potential economic opportunities include tourism due to restored and enhanced recreational use of the Penobscot River as well as improved commercial fisheries stock.

Penobscot River Restoration Project background:

The project originated when PPL Corporation, a Pennsylvania-based energy company, purchased the Penobscot dams more than a decade ago. PPL, the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Penobscot Indian Nation, the State of Maine, and several conservation groups, worked to develop the Lower Penobscot River Multi-Party Settlement Agreement (2004), a comprehensive solution to numerous complex issues involving hydropower relicensing, migratory fish passage and ecological restoration on the Penobscot River. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Restoration Center is also a major project partner, with roles in implementation, funding and science. This public-private effort – the Penobscot River Restoration Project – aims to restore the Penobscot River’s once abundant sea-run fisheries while maintaining hydropower, with the potential for widespread cultural, economic, recreational, and ecological benefits.

In 2009, PPL sold the majority of its hydropower assets in the Penobscot drainage, except for the dams that the Penobscot Trust later purchased, to Black Bear Hydro Partners, LLC, which assumed PPL's role under the agreement and now operates and manages the projects locally. In 2010, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust purchased the three dams from PPL for about \$24 million in public and private funds as the first step toward restoring the river.

Removal of the Great Works Dam begins on-the-ground Project implementation and will be followed by removal of the downstream Veazie Dam – the dam closest to the sea – and construction of a bypass channel around the Howland Dam approximately 30 miles upstream.

The Penobscot River Restoration Trust

The Penobscot River Restoration Trust is a non-profit organization responsible for implementing, along with other project partners, core aspects of the Penobscot Project. In 2010, the Trust purchased the three dams from PPL for about \$24 million in public and private funds opening a new chapter for the Penobscot River, its fish, wildlife and people. After an extensive public permitting process, the Trust now holds the necessary state and federal permits to fully implement the project. Members of the Trust include the Penobscot Indian Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Maine Audubon, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Trout Unlimited, and The Nature Conservancy.

Major funders for the project include NOAA and DOI as well as various foundations and private donors.

####