

## Penobscot Nation moves forward with river restoration project

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*Photos courtesy Penobscot River Restoration Project --*

The Great Works Dam, located on the Penobscot River, is one of two dams, the Penobscot River

Restoration Project plans to purchase and demolish. Removal of the dam will increase the migration of fish to the Penobscot Indian Nation community. Below: A salmon swims in the Penobscot River.

budgeted \$3.5 million to the project.

The project plans to remove the two most seaward dams, Veazie and Great Works, and build a fish bypass around a third dam, Howland.

"This would have a great impact on our community," Banks said. "The fish leaving our nation affected our people greatly, from cultural practices to nutrition. Also, there a lot of tribe members who would love to be able to harvest these fish."

Banks said that historically there were between 75,000 and 100,000 salmon in the Penobscot River near the nation. Today, Banks said, there are less than 1,500 salmon in those waters. The removal of the dams and the creation of the bypass would potentially increase the number of salmon to more than 10,000. Even more drastic, the number of shad, which is currently near zero, would increase to 1.5 million with the project.

Banks, who represented the Penobscot Nation, read statements by members of the nation and their memories of the river.

"My grandfather used to tell us of the time when the river would literally boil from bank to bank as the numbers of salmon were so great in running the Penobscot each spring," according to a statement from Jim Sappier, a chief of the Penobscot Nation.

Jerry Pardilla, Penobscot, said in another statement that the Penobscot River is the backbone of the nation.

"Our name is derived from the description of the land here in this region. And the river that flows through it bears our name, or we bear its name. And so then we would call ourselves Pana wampskik, [meaning] 'We are people of that place.'"

In effort to raise more money for the project, Banks urged members of USET to consider contributing to the effort.

"The Choctaws are the first tribe to have generously stepped forward with an initial commitment toward river restoration," Banks said. "We feel this is a tremendous victory and we are proud of their involvement as donors to this effort. Now leadership from other tribes is critically important as it will help us to build upon this initial success by growing the Choctaw's gift to a higher level and it will open doors to even more tribes in the future."

For more information on the project or to donate, visit [www.penobscotriver.org](http://www.penobscotriver.org).

<http://www.indiancountry.com/content.cfm?id=1096413119&print=yes>

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