

Penobscot restoration reels in new funding

In October of 2003, a group of industrial, conservation and state and federal agencies — along with the Penobscot Indian Nation — announced a bold plan to restore the Penobscot River by buying dams, eliminating them or adding fish passages and reopening the watershed to migrating fish.

The Penobscot River Restoration Project was heralded at the time as an effort that could serve as a model for future conservation plans across the country.

Thanks to an infusion of federal money and a determined private fundraising effort, the project continues toward a goal that many — even the optimists — recognized as rather lofty just four years ago.

This week the project received another piece of good news, as one of the nation's leading outdoor companies announced an ambitious campaign that will benefit the river and restoration efforts.



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The Orvis Co. has teamed up with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to raise another \$150,000 that would be used to help remove dams on the river. According to a news release, the folks from Orvis and the NFWF will match donor contributions, turning every dollar donated into three dollars in the restoration fund.

In addition to that matching campaign, Orvis is promoting a program in which customers will be asked if they want to “round up” their purchase amount in increments of \$1 to \$100, with the proceeds going toward dam removal.

“The Penobscot River is the second largest river in New England and the only remaining stronghold for the nation’s struggling runs of wild Atlantic salmon,” Penobscot River Restoration Trust executive director Laura Rose Day said in a statement. “Yet multiple dams still prevent the migration of Atlantic salmon and several other species of sea-run fish to key habitat. By selectively removing dams and improving access to nearly 1,000 miles of habitat, Orvis and its customers will help give Atlantic salmon their last, best chance to rebound.”

In another initiative, Orvis will be raffling off a beautiful handcrafted Penobscot Nation birch-bark canoe.

The canoe is currently on display at the Orvis store in Manchester, Vt., and the raffle is part of an effort to raise \$375,000 for the restoration project.

Congratulations to the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, and thanks to Orvis and the NFWF for recognizing the importance of the ongoing project.