



Recovery Act to help fund Penobscot sea-run fish restoration

AUGUSTA (June 30): The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration announced Tuesday, June 30, that it will invest \$6.1 million through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to help rebuild sea-run fisheries of the Penobscot River.

A grant to the Penobscot River Restoration Trust will fund removal of the Great Works dam, a barrier to the sea-run fish restoration, as well as scientific monitoring of the Penobscot River Restoration Project.

The Penobscot Project is a public-private partnership to restore self-sustaining runs of Atlantic salmon, American shad, river herring, and seven other species while maintaining hydropower generation on Maine's largest river system.

The trust will purchase three dams, remove the two closest to the sea — Veazie and Great Works — and construct a fish bypass at a third at Howland to increase access to nearly 1,000 miles of habitat.

Great Works, which will be removed with this award, lies above Veazie and is the second dam from the sea. Removal of the Veazie dam will occur at a later date for fish management reasons.

"NOAA's decision to invest in the Penobscot Project will produce restoration-related jobs for the region now, and the natural infrastructure to support increased, more diverse economic, culture, and recreational opportunities well into the future," said Laura Rose Day, executive director of the Penobscot Trust in a press release.

"This is fantastic news for the region and we are committed to working with businesses, communities, and others to ensure a smooth transition to a restored river."

Work to deconstruct the Great Works dam, combined with predam removal scientific monitoring, will yield nearly \$5 million in jobs for the region and is expected to employ nearly 155 people in restoration-related engineering and heavy construction jobs (the equivalent of 38 annualized jobs).

The work, over a 24-month project period, will create jobs for construction workers, technical experts including engineers and hydrologists, work for local businesses such as nurseries and contractors, as well as jobs related to scientific monitoring.

“In addition to the immediate jobs created by the projects, stronger and healthier coastal communities will boost our nation’s long-term economic health,” said Commerce under secretary of oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator Jane Lubchenco.

This federal funding reinforces the national significance of this unprecedented partnership between PPL Corporation, the Penobscot Indian Nation, seven conservation groups, and state and federal agencies.

The trust was awarded the grant through a highly competitive process that considered more than 800 proposals requesting nearly \$3 billion from the \$170 million federal funding opportunity.

Funding was made available by Congress in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act because of the recognition that investment in “green jobs” is good for the economy and the environment.

As part of the project, PPL will maintain at least current levels of energy production on the river; it has already increased power generation by raising water levels and by repowering the Orono Dam.

PPL will have the opportunity to reuse turbines from the decommissioned dams to increase generation at its remaining dams. PPL will also enhance fish passage at four dams, including construction of a fish elevator at Milford which will become the first dam on the river. PPL will maintain its employment levels.

The Penobscot Trust partners, with leadership from Maine’s Congressional Delegation, the State of Maine, NOAA Fisheries and the USFWS, have raised \$25 million in private and public funds to purchase the dams.

Additional funds are needed to complete the restoration. The trust will complete its purchase of dams once it has received final permits, currently under review.

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