

The Penobscot River Restoration Project: Roadmap to a Pre-1840's Gulf of Maine Coastal Fisheries

6 March 2008

In December, I wrote a letter of strong support to the Penobscot River Restoration Trust in which I thank them for taking on the enormous task of securing the future of our Gulf of Maine economy and ecology by starting the process of restoring the Sea-Run Fisheries of the Penobscot River. Our collective efforts will be vital to Maine's economic future for generations to come through best practices in our Marine fisheries and the opening of the river arteries that flow into the Gulf of Maine. Other river systems like the St. Croix most follow suit expediently because of their vital role as food energy for the coastal marine fisheries like Lobster, Shellfish and Alewives and Whales. To cut off these important river arteries is tantamount to destroying our economy and corrupting the ecological connections between Land and Sea.

One summer long ago, I worked on Isleboro and found out from local fisherman that the fishing industry in Maine was threatened by corporate over fishing and watershed issues. The Penobscot was already in trouble ecologically because of pollution but reasonable voices were over shadowed by failing government policies and corporate interests uncaring about the economy of Gulf of Maine fishing communities.

Throughout my 25 years of professional biologist work along coastal Gulf of Maine and as a birdwatching, nature and ecology guide in Bar Harbor, my company has been a voice for government policies which will lead to a pre-1840's open river system (with electricity production of course) allowing rivers ecological energies to feed our marine/ commercial fisheries. These policies must include Marine reserves off shore coupled with the incredible ecological potential of opening the Penobscot and other Maine rivers like the St. Croix.

Several years ago a great deal of effort went into the planning for educating the public through Ecotourism (**See DESTINY 2000/2010). I have been telling my cliental that it is a **National Security Issue** that we open the dams of as many Maine Rivers as possible that feed into the Gulf of Maine because this is where our **Food** comes from. Fish, lobsters, shellfish and urchins are all staples of our healthy fisheries. The only problem is that our communities do not have a coastal fisheries economy anymore because of government mismanagement, over-fishing and ecological illiteracy about the connection between the role of healthy and productive watersheds and a healthy **economy**. One of the vital keys to our current ecological crisis is removing dams and opening the riverine habitats of Maine's great rivers.

The Penobscot River Restoration Project is the most important ecological restoration project of modern Gulf of Maine times and has significant ecological ramifications. The incredible bio-geo-chemical energy of the Penobscot River will begin the process of rejuvenating the health of Coastal Maine ecosystems by allowing millions of sea-run fish back into traditional Inland spawning grounds. Coastal communities can begin to

rebuild their fishing economy which is crucial to the long-term economic growth of Maine.

Birdwatching has been a growing tourist activity during the last several years and we predict that trend will continue to attract birdwatchers and nature enthusiasts to Maine communities. But the loss of river and streamside forests and associated wetlands have had an inverse relationship on the health and productivity of bird populations like Warblers, Flycatchers, Water birds, Sandpipers, all high on the species list of birdwatchers who will spend hundreds of dollars to see them

Several years ago the Penobscot River was listed as America's 10th most polluted River thanks to a myriad of dioxin and mercury related issues. This ecological crisis can only be averted if industry, government and Maine citizens stop the pollution. During this public scoping process the pollution issues of the Penobscot River and the Gulf of Maine must be addressed and discussed. All stakeholders have a responsibility in helping to enhance the sea-run fisheries including the major polluters of the river such as the Forest Products Industry. The Penobscot Indian Nation can offer much insight into the cancer rates among its tribal members who have traditionally eaten the fish of the polluted river.

The Great Rivers of Maine have a history of abuse in the Northern Forest due to economic incentives. The inland spawning grounds for sea-run fish of the Penobscot River system are the bloodlines to healthy coastal ecological systems. Down East Nature Tours and many from the professional guiding community along coastal Maine enthusiastically support the Penobscot River Restoration Project. Spring 2008 on Mount Desert Island will be running **the10th Acadia Birding Festival.com** celebrating the ecological wonders of coastal Maine Birds, Whales, Wetlands and Watersheds.

Respectively Yours,

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