

Androscoggin River: Ripe for Renewal

Brunswick Town Council

February 3, 2025

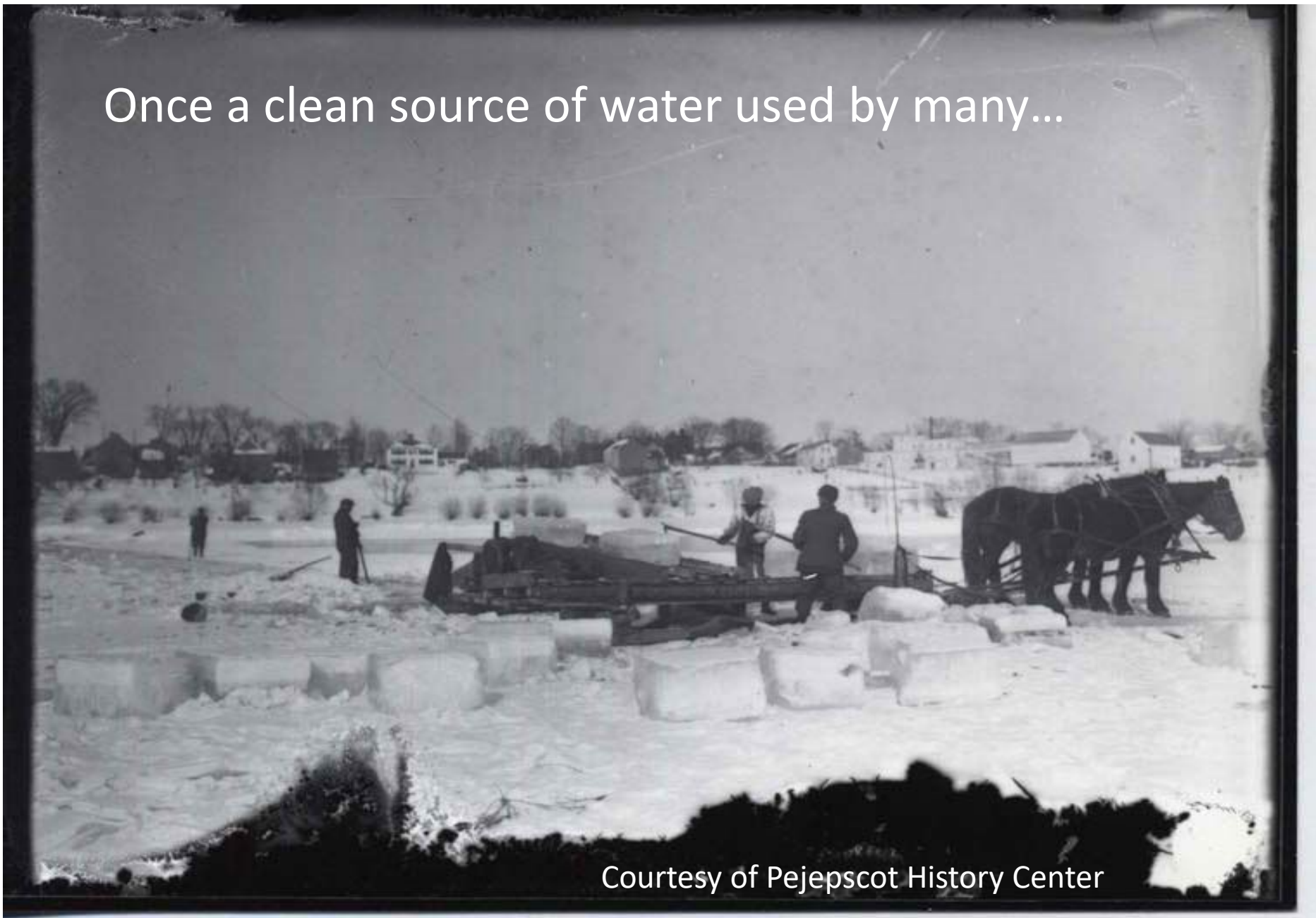


- Presenter:
- Chip Spies, Water Street Resident, and member of Free the Andro Coalition and Merrymeeting Bay Trout Unlimited

The Andro is a big beautiful river!

- Maine's third largest river @178 miles long.
- It has been highly valued by humans for thousands of years.
- With industry came pollution and reduced fisheries.
- The Clean Water Act has worked! – it now has a Class B Rating

Once a clean source of water used by many...



Courtesy of Pejepscot History Center

Ice Harvesting Water Street

It is returning!



AND
IT is OUR Public Resource!!



SOME DAM-FISH HISTORY

200 years of trouble for our fisheries

- Native Americans and 17th century English settlers experienced the Andro's extraordinary catches of salmon and other species.
- By the early 1800s, mill dams had destroyed the enormous fish runs and triggered pleas for regulations “to permit suitable passage way for fish.” These were ignored.
- Dams are attributed to the loss of Maine's near shore cod fishery as early as 1880¹.
- At head-of-tide, the Brunswick-Topsham dam is the first barrier to migratory fish.

¹SEVERAL SOURCES: Ames, E. P. 2004. Atlantic cod structure in the Gulf of Maine. *Fisheries Research* 29:10-28.

Ames, E. P. and J. Lichter. 2013. Gadids and alewives: structure within complexity in the Gulf of Maine. *Fisheries Research* 141:70-79.

Baird, S. 1872-1873. U. S. Commissioner of Fish and Fisheries Report of 1873. Washington, D. C.

Eleven Diadromous (Migratory) Species Found in the Andro*

Anadromous:

Shortnose Sturgeon

Atlantic Sturgeon

Rainbow Smelt

Atlantic Tomcod

Alewife

American Shad

Blueback Herring

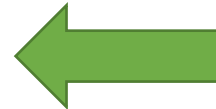
Striped Bass

Sea Lamprey

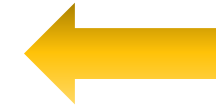
Atlantic Salmon



Historically below Great Falls in Brunswick



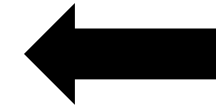
Historically below Lewiston Falls and up to Biscoe Falls on the Little Andro to West Paris



Historically up to Rumford Falls on the mainstem and Snow Falls In Norway on the Little Andro

Catadromous:

American Eel



Eels just kept on going beyond All the cascades


* Sea-run Brook Trout may occur below Brunswick ??

The Current Brunswick-Topsham Dam and Powerplant



Upstream and Downstream Passages



A large school of river herring is seen swimming in a fishway. The fish are silvery with a yellowish-gold tint on their sides, and they are arranged in a dense, diagonal pattern. The water is a murky, brownish-yellow color. The fishway structure is visible on the left and right sides of the frame.

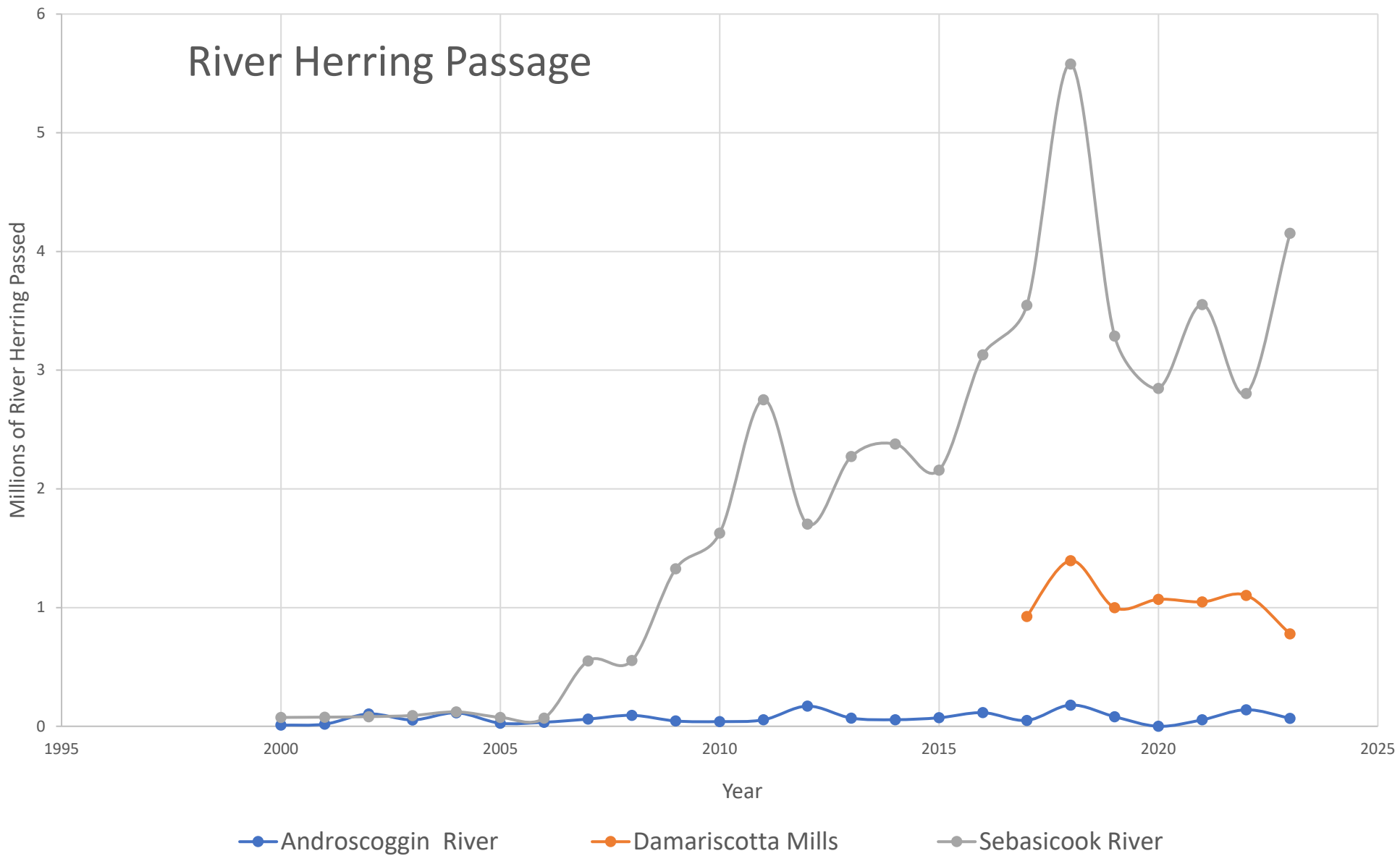
Brunswick Fishway – River Herring
“Looks are Deceiving”

Potential Adult Production Versus Actual Adult Returns

Potential Future Adult Production and Actual #s Currently Returning to Brunswick Fishway	Year	River Herring (Alewife & Blueback)	American Shad	Atlantic Salmon
Potential	Future?	3,731,000	128,000	579
Actual Adults Entering Fishway	2016	114,874	1,096	0
	2017	49,923	1	1
	2018	179,040	32	1
	2019	81,025	63	1
	2020	67	23	5
	2021	54,906	550	1

Fishway source: Counts conducted using the Brunswick Upstream Fishway and published by DMR and Brookfield Renewable Energy Group.

Potential numbers source: 2017 Draft Fisheries Management Plan for the Lower Androscoggin River, Little Androscoggin River and Sabattus River



Source: Dr John Lichter using DMR Trap count data and Mark Becker, Fish Agent for Nobleboro and Newcastle, Maine.

BRUNSWICK-TOPSHAM DAM

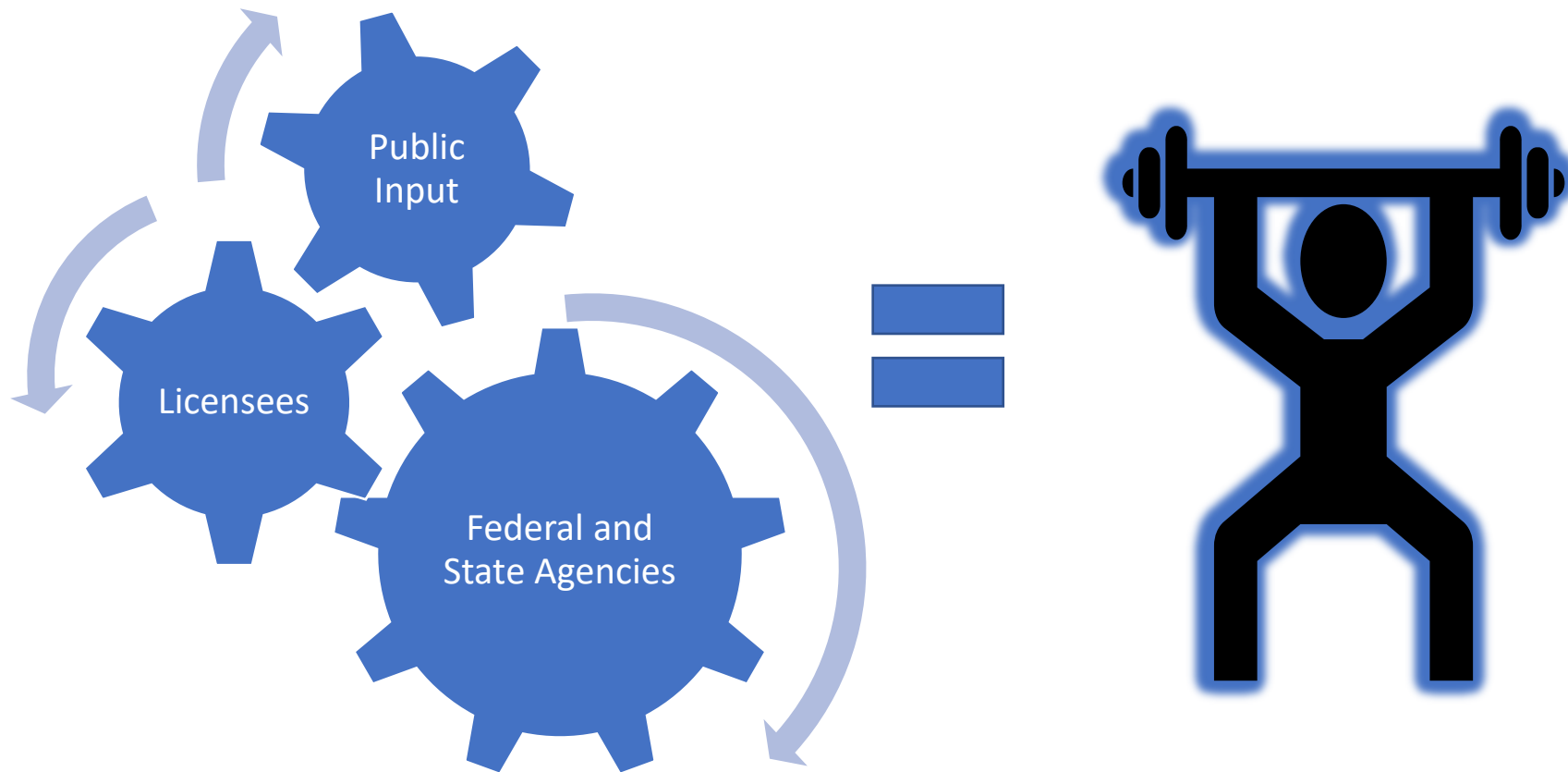
HYDRO POWER PRODUCTION AND ECONOMICS

- Owned by the Canadian company Brookfield Renewable.
- Brookfield controls 84.7% of Maine's Hydro Facilities.
- This dam accounts for:
 - 2.6% of hydro power production in Maine.
 - 3.0% of Brookfield's Maine production.
- Per Brookfield:
 - The dam produces 90,000 MWhs/year.
 - Enough to service 13,000 homes.
- The energy is sold on the open market throughout New England.
 - Gross sales from this dam are estimated at \$9,000,000/year.

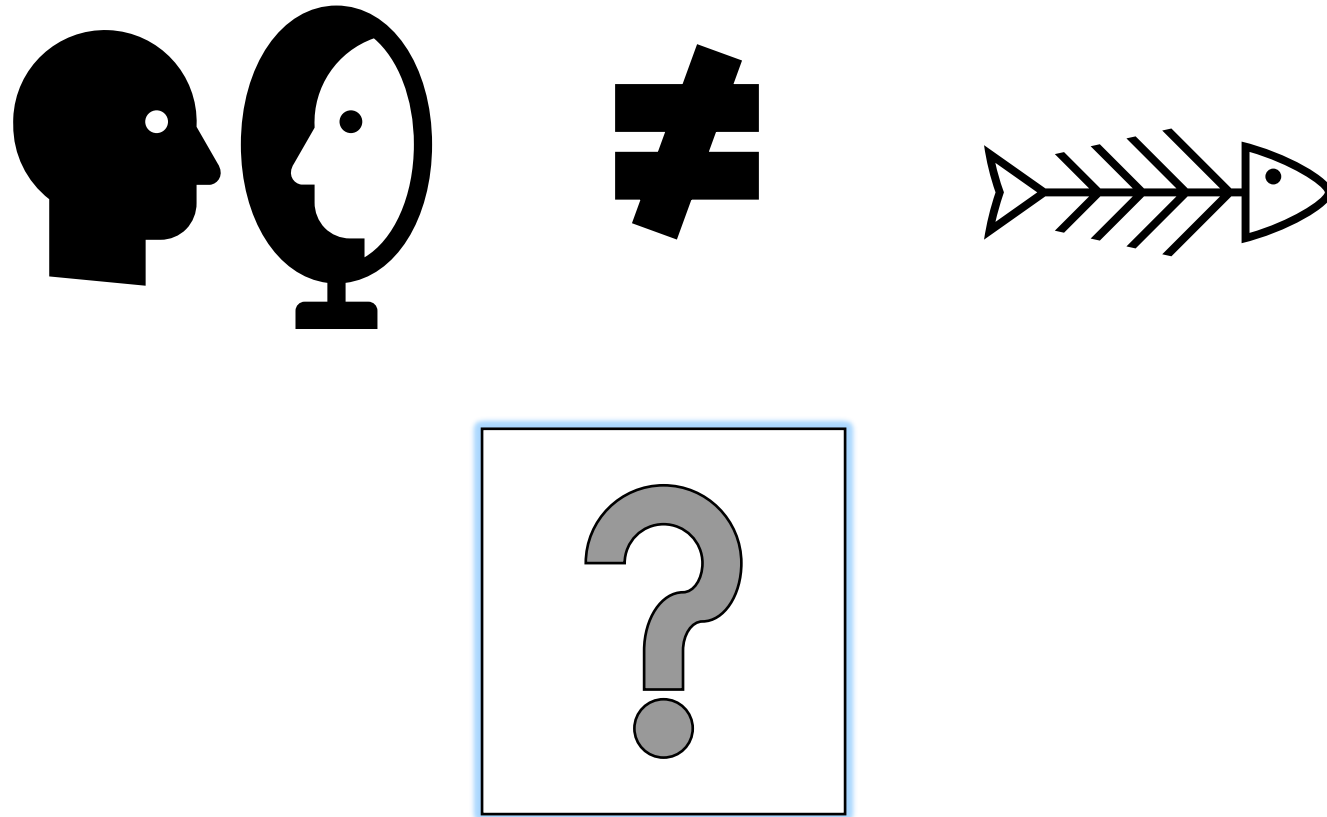
This is a Once in a Generation Opportunity
to
Make Things Better!

- A FERC relicense will set the stage for another 30-50 years.
- The Brunswick-Topsham dam was last licensed in 1979.
- The Andro has changed since and we have learned much.
- Current fishways exist but haven't worked well for 45 years.
- The Clean Water Act has worked – fish passage can be next!

The FERC Relicensing Process = A Heavy Lift Between Now and 2029+



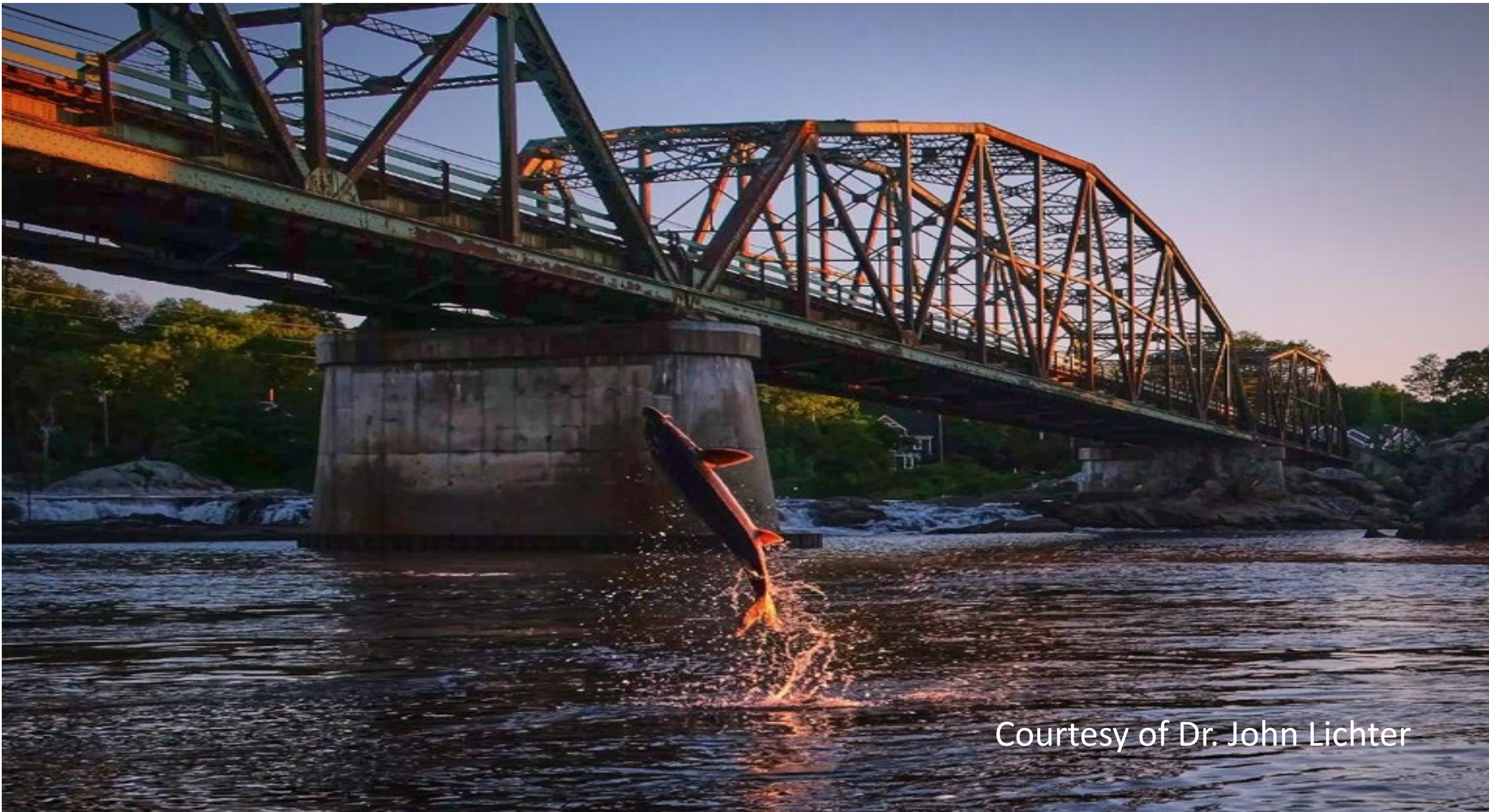
After 400 years, can we look in the mirror and make things better?



A CALL TO ACTION

“People protect what they value”

- The Brunswick Dam Relicensing Timeline: 2024 – at least 2029.
- Protect and improve the multi-use public resource that is the Androscoggin River.
- The more people know the more they will care.
- The more people use the river the more they will care.
- Tell your legislators that you care about the river and ALL its communities.
- Reach out to me and others to ask questions and help us learn.



Courtesy of Dr. John Lichter

Free the Andro Coalition*

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*Current Coalition Members:

- Merrymeeting Bay Trout Unlimited
- Maine Rivers
- American Rivers