

BRUNSWICK PARKS & RECREATION DEPARTMENT

220 NEPTUNE DRIVE

BRUNSWICK ME 04011-1584

TEL (207) 725-6656

THOMAS M. FARRELL
Director

SABRINA BEST
Deputy Director

January 29, 2025

Brunswick Town Council
85 Union Street
Brunswick, Maine 04011

RE: Androscoggin River Fish Passage Resolution

Dear Councilors,

The Recreation Commission met on December 18, 2024 and heard from Brunswick resident and the Founder & Coordinator of the Free the Androscoggin River Coalition, Chip Spies regarding an effort to improve fish passage at the Brunswick Topsham Hydroelectric Dam just upstream of the Frank Wood Bridge.

We learned that the existing fishway was constructed in the early 1980's and has not worked well since opening. Fish attempting to swim up the current fishway must ascend via a series of approximately seventy cement chambers each containing an eight-inch slot that the fish pass through on their way to the top. Once at the top of the fishway they are trapped and are either trucked upstream or released above the dam. While attempting to ascend the fishway many of the fish experience de-scaling when encountering the concrete chambers. This scarring to the fish' scales leads both to infection and energy loss.

Additionally, fish attempting to come downstream from above the dam are subject to significant mortality rates when caught up in the turbines. According to Mr. Spies both the upstream and downstream passage has been documented by the Maine Department of Marine Resources and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in their respective comprehensive plans and determined as not working well.

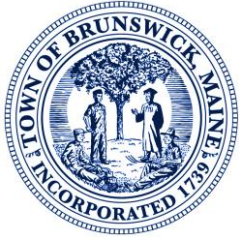
As the relicensing process is currently underway with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission for the Brunswick Topsham Hydroelectric Dam, now is the time to convey the town's input relative to improving fish passage at the current dam site. To add our voice to this request we voted unanimously to endorse the resolution entitled "Androscoggin River Fish Passage Resolution" that you will be considering at your February 3rd, 2025 meeting. The Recreation Commission sees this as an important piece in Brunswick's continued commitment to improving the environment, addressing climate change and restoring traditional runs of anadromous fish in significantly higher numbers to the Androscoggin River.

Very Truly Yours,



Michael Lyne, Chair
Brunswick Recreation Commission

Pc: Chip Spies, Free the Androscoggin River Coalition



Town of Brunswick, Maine

INCORPORATED 1739

OFFICE OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

85 UNION STREET

BRUNSWICK, MAINE 04011-2418

TELEPHONE 207-725-6660

FAX 207-725-6663

Date: Wednesday, January 8th, 2025
To: The Brunswick Town Council
From: The Brunswick Conservation Commission
Subject: Brookfield Dam Fishway Resolution

Councilors:

We urge you to vote in favor of the resolution being presented to you by our Parks and Recreation Director and the Free the Andro Coalition on behalf of fish passage at the Brookfield Dam at head of tide on the Androscoggin River.

On December 4th, 2024, at our monthly meeting, the Conservation Commission got to hear from the Coalition's president Charlie Spies. His presentation of the Coalition's advocacy for improved fish passage was followed by a lively discussion of the potential of that work.

At our January 8th meeting, we voted unanimously (6-0) to recommend the resolution.

As citizens of the Androscoggin River watershed, our townspeople have much to gain from the ongoing improvement of the river's health. Within living memory for many of us, saying "Androscoggin" was enough to wrinkle a citizen's nose. The river was remarkably polluted and toxic; its legendary fish runs were simply history.

The ongoing work to control pollution from industry and runoff has brought a new era to the river; the water has improved, reaching Class B status along a number of its reaches, and the fish are returning. This rich resource for our town and others along the river is primed to return to vigorous health.

To do so fully, however, its dams need to be modified or removed, and the time for such actions comes with the (FERC) (Federal Energy Relicensing Commission) relicensing that each dam must undergo every 40-50 years. Brunswick's Brookfield dam is up for relicensing in 2029, and the research and investigative work is happening now. Research already shows that this dam's contributions to the power grid are minor and can be replaced with conservation and/or other sustainable sources.

Our current time has the promise of a new understanding and vision for Brunswick watersheds little and large, from Mere Brook to the Androscoggin. We think that supporting this movement is a positive and essential step for our town and for our region.

The Conservation Commission supports the efforts of our Parks and Recreation Department and the Free the Andro Coalition, and we ask that you consider and pass the resolution that they have brought before you.

Respectfully,

The Brunswick Conservation Commission

*Abbie Sewall, Rob Moore, Kevin Sullivan, Helene Harrower, Geoff Lawrence,
Kurt Stinson (Vice Chair), Sandy Stott (Chair)*



Town of Brunswick, Maine

INCORPORATED 1739

Rivers & Coastal Waters Commission

85 UNION STREET

BRUNSWICK, MAINE 04011

TELEPHONE 207-725-6659 FAX 207-725-6627

Marko Melendy

Chairman

Cory Theberge

Vice-Chair

TO: Brunswick Town Council

CC: Tom Farrell, Daniel Devereaux, Chip Spies

FROM: Brunswick Rivers and Coastal Waters Commission (RCWC)

SUBJECT: Support for FERC Engagement Resolution

DATE: January 16, 2025

On December 18th, the "Free the Andro Coalition" (Merrymeeting Bay Trout Unlimited, Maine Rivers, American Rivers), made a detailed presentation detailing a strategy for engaging with the FERC to seek upgrades to existing fish passage on the Androscoggin River at the Brunswick-Topsham Dam site.

Commissioners present unanimously supported the proposed resolution, attached to our meeting packet, with the goal of restoring healthy populations of migratory fish to historical numbers. If successful, this effort will contribute to the ongoing environmental, economic and recreational health of the Androscoggin River and the residents of the Town of Brunswick.

Sincerely,

Marko Melendy

RCWC Chair & Marine Resource Committee Representative



Brunswick Shellfish Committee

85 Union Street Brunswick Maine 04011

To: Brunswick Town Council

CC: Chip Spies, Tom Farell, Dan Devereaux

FROM: Brunswick Shellfish Committee

RE: Committee Support

DATE: January 20, 2025

During the December meeting of the Brunswick Shellfish Committee, Mr. Chip Spies from the Merrymeeting Bay Chapter of Trout Unlimited presented information on the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) dam relicensing process. Mr. Spies highlighted evidence showing that the current fish passage system is severely inadequate. As part of the FERC relicensing process, he is seeking the town's support for a resolution to enhance fish passage. This resolution is included in the committee's December meeting packet.

The committee unanimously agreed that improving fish passage on the Androscoggin River is a valuable investment. Restoring sea-run migratory fish passage offers significant ecological, economic, and cultural benefits. Species such as alewives, shad, and salmon are crucial for maintaining healthy ecosystems by serving as a food source for birds, mammals, and larger fish. Enhanced fish passage increases biodiversity, improves freshwater and marine productivity, and supports both commercial and recreational fisheries. Furthermore, it preserves cultural traditions, supports local livelihoods, improves water quality, aligns with the town's conservation goals, and strengthens local resilience to climate change.

Sincerely,

Cody Gillis

Cody Gillis, Vice Chair

On behalf of the Brunswick Marine Resource Committee