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Securing a future for fishing communities

April 27, 2015

State of Maine Legislature
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
Sen. Linda Baker, Senate Chair
Rep. Walter Kumiega, House Chair

RE: Oppose L.D. 800

Dear Committee Members;

Thank you for the opportunity to share our comments in opposition to L.D. 800. As you know, Penobscot East Resource Center is a Stonington based non-profit focused on sustaining fishing communities through sustainable fishing, forever.

We are fundamentally opposed to this bill and any other that would prevent passage of river herring on the St. Croix River or any other Maine river. We oppose any such action for the following reasons:

- 1. Alewives are a native and historically important species throughout the region and are critical to rebuilding Maine's anadromous and marine fisheries.** Alewives and other anadromous fish serve as a link between ocean and freshwater systems, and there are clear records of alewives historically ascending into the western reaches of the St. Croix. They are an important food source dozens of species and act as a prey buffer for other fish species including salmon smolts. Each year, millions of dollars are spent restoring salmon to Maine's rivers and river herring will be critical to the success of these efforts. Alewife reductions have also been linked to the collapse of the groundfish resource downeast and restoration of alewives is a real opportunity to restore once plentiful groundfish stocks (see work by Ted Ames).
- 2. Preventing passage would be a clear violation of the Clean Water Act.** LD 800 would violate federal Clean Water Act regulations. Although many think of chemical and physical characteristics covered under the Act it also

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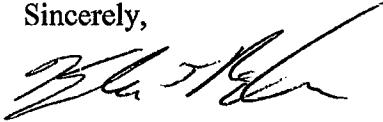
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affords critical protections for the biological integrity of the nation's waters, including passage of native fishes.

- 3. River herring are a valuable resource to local communities.** Statewide, blueback herring and alewives support locally important commercial and recreational fisheries. In the St. Croix River system there are numerous coastal, riverside, and tribal communities that stand to benefit from ongoing restoration efforts through everything from traditional fishing to harvesting fresh, local bait and food. LD 800 would violate the rights of local tribes and cripple international agreements with Canada and the Province of New Brunswick. Preventing passage of alewives through the Grand Falls Dam eliminates opportunities for community members throughout the watershed.

The ecological and economic losses this bill would bring to local communities are simply so significant that we can see no benefit to this bill and encourage the Committee to kill LD 800. Further, we encourage the Committee to focus on efforts to restore effective fish passage on rivers throughout the state. All projects and research to date indicate that investments in restoration will bring positive benefits to Maine taxpayers, fishermen, sportsmen and their communities.

Sincerely,



Kyle Molton
Policy Director