



Conservation Council of New Brunswick
Conseil de conservation du Nouveau-Brunswick
www.conservationcouncil.ca

Sen. Linda Baker and Rep. Walter Kumiega, Co-Chairs
Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources
Maine Legislature
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333

April 26, 2014

Dear Sen. Baker and Rep Kumiega,

I understand that you are considering LD 800, a bill to prevent passage of alewives through the Grand Falls dam on the St. Croix River. With respect to this bill, I would like to impress upon you the critical importance of alewives to the St Croix River and to the Bay of Fundy and the fisheries it supports.

As coastal areas face increasing ecological effects from climate change, habitat degradation and many pollutants, the presence (and in the case of the St Croix, restoration) of an important fish species like alewives can be critical to maintaining ocean ecosystems. Alewives are identified as a keystone species because of the critical role they play in both freshwater and marine ecosystems. Travelling in large schools, alewives serve as a nutritious food source for groundfish, such as cod,ⁱ many open ocean fish species, marine mammals (including porpoise, seals, and whales), and fish-eating birds.ⁱⁱ

As representatives of the people of Maine, you are well aware that the future of Maine, and New Brunswick I might add, rely on a healthy coastal ecosystem that can support vibrant fisheries and industries like eco-tourism that rely on whales, seabirds, and other animals. Unless we take care of species like alewives at the base of the food chain, we will lose the resources they support.

In 1851, Moses Perley noted that, in the 1820's "[alewives] came in such quantities [to the St Croix], that it was supposed they never could be destroyed." In response to threats he saw then to the health of the St. Croix watershed, Perley remarked that "it will be highly discreditable to allow the extinction of the fisheries of this river, now threatened with total annihilation."ⁱⁱⁱ The declines Perley forecasted did occur.

Two years ago the St. Croix's alewives were given a much deserved chance to return to their ancestral spawning grounds, and their restoration is underway. In other river systems, alewife restoration has been beneficial for smallmouth bass and we can expect the same here in the St Croix River.

Alewives are good for coastal fisheries, good for the tourism industry, good for the Bay of Fundy, and good for the St. Croix River.

I thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts. The St Croix River, homeland of the Passamaquoddy people, is also shared by New Brunswick and Maine, Canada and the USA; together we can all share in the benefits of alewife restoration.

Sincerely,



Matthew Abbott
Fundy Baykeeper
Conservation Council of New Brunswick

ⁱ Adrian Jordaan, Carolyn Hall and Michael Frisk, *Is the recovery of cod (Gadus morhua) along the Maine coast limited by reduced anadromous river herring populations?*, (Stony Brook, NY: Marine Sciences Research Center, School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences Stony Brook University, 2008), 6.
<http://www.gomher.org/JordaanTegnerReport.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Ethan Nedeau, "The Amazing Alewife," *Gulf of Maine Times*, Summer 2003, Volume 7, No. 2.

ⁱⁱⁱ Moses H. Perley, *The Sea and River Fisheries of New Brunswick*, (Fredericton, NB: Queen's Printer, Presented to the Legislature and printed in 1851).