

**Testimony for
LD 800, An Act To Prevent Passage of Alewives through the Grand Falls Dam on
the St. Croix River - April 27, 2015**

Good Morning, Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, Representative Dana and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Marine Resources. My name is Newell Lewey. I am a member of the Passamaquoddy Tribe and a Tribal Council Member. I thank you for this opportunity to offer testimony in strong opposition of LD 800.

Washington County is one of the poorest counties in Maine. This makes the towns and the Tribe prime targets for development of devastating industries such as liquefied natural gas plants, tidal barrage generation and the like with the promise of jobs and economy. They pick on our struggling communities: we don't need or want these ecologically devastating industries, we have what we need already and accept our responsibility to restore our communities. The restoration of a thriving alewife run would go a long way to meet these objectives.

Many of us have witnessed the effects of river restoration on most of the rivers here in Maine with new plants growing in the restored area, and fish and wildlife returning to the reopened habitat. However, that beautiful landscape or recovery of an endangered species isn't the only driver behind the dollars spent to restore our rivers and our fisheries. Thankfully we have information on just what river restoration means to the economy.

I'll touch on a few of the economic outcomes of restoring migratory river herring here in Maine and more generally the Northeast. For reference, the term "river herring" includes the species of blueback herring and alewife.

In healthy, connected streams, these fish are a critical biomass as they return in the tens or hundreds of thousands to spawn in freshwater. They provide important forage for species of interest to the recreational and commercial fishing industry, including striped bass and Atlantic Bluefin tuna as well as cod and Pollock. According to the American Sportfishing Association's 2013 report, *Sportfishing in America*, the sport fishing industry brought in \$395 million just in retail sales within the State of Maine in 2011. That same year, the report estimates that the sport fishing industry also brought over 6,700 jobs to Maine. The economic impact of salt water fishing in Maine in this same report is \$114 million which includes just under 2,000 jobs. (A copy of this report is avail online at:

http://asafishing.org/uploads/2011_ASASportfishing_in_America_Report_January_2013.pdf).

These dollar figures are just part of the reason why projects that restore river herring, are so important. The more important reason is the restoration of the food security infrastructure to the Passamaquoddy People. For thousands of years, these river

herring provided forage for the Pollock, the fish that carries our name along with the other ground fish in the Passamaquoddy Bay and the St. Croix watershed. Since the decline of the alewife, the size and abundance of these important ground fish have diminished drastically. We have undertaken a food sovereignty project with a goal of 50% food self-sufficiency in 4 years. Part of this project includes the restoration of our traditional fisheries as food.

Economic contributions of dam removal and river restoration projects that go beyond fisheries food benefits include jobs created directly from the projects and new opportunities for recreational boating and riverside trails. As a result, these projects bring much needed resources to local communities.

The State of Maine and the Tribes have much to gain by working together to serve their respective constituents. We urge a strong ought not to pass of LD 800 which will best serve all the people of Washington County.

I would like to close by thanking you for this opportunity to testify before you on this very important issue.

Newell Lewey