

LD800

An Act To Prevent Passage of Alewives through the Grand Falls Dam on the St. Croix River
Public Hearing Before the Marine Resources Committee

April 27, 2015

Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, members of the Marine Resources Committee, I am Paul Bisulca, a resident of Oxford, Maine, and I am here on behalf of the Schoodic RiverKeepers, a Passamaquoddy grassroots organization. I am speaking against LD800.

Three years ago, I was invited to work with Passamaquoddy to achieve fish passage on the St. Croix River for native sea-run fish species. We accomplished that in 2013 with Representative Madonna Soctomah's bill, LD72. Since passage of the bill, the Passamaquoddy have signed a Statement of Cooperation with U.S. agencies for the restoration of native sea-run fish to the St. Croix River, have coordinated activities with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and have raised over half a million dollars from federal and private grants for restoration and monitoring with the expectation of accessing over a million dollars by next year. This money has and will continue to be injected into the Washington County economy.

From the beginning, we have been clear that it is not our intent to harm the livelihood of our neighbors engaged in sport fishing activities, and we conveyed that message in a meeting with their representatives. But, we also have a responsibility to ensure the survival of our own economy and culture, as well as to respect and be responsive to the interests of our Down East and Maritime Canada neighbors who make their living from the sea. This was clearly what the governments of the United States and Canada had in mind in 1955 when they referred to the International Joint Commission for Boundary Waters a request to determine whether greater use, advantageous to both countries, could be made of the St. Croix River waters. Two of the recommendations contained in the Commissions' 1959 report are the maintenance and improvement of inland fishery resources and the restoration of anadromous fish runs. Both governments and the International Joint Commission consider these recommendations to be mutually attainable, as do we.

Presently, the Passamaquoddy tribe is fully engaged in the implementation of the recommendation to restore anadromous fish runs and through a joint council resolution has expressed the tribal government's commitment to this effort. And, we do this restoration with the understanding that the benefits derived from use of the waters in this basin are to be shared fairly by all, Americans and Canadians, fresh water guides and salt water fishermen. As such, we reject the notion that use of St. Croix waters is the exclusive right of a few. And as we proceed in our effort to restore sea-run fish, we fully expect that all will realize that the St. Croix River watershed is just like every other watershed in Maine: a place where smallmouth bass in the St. Croix will become just as potbellied from eating alewife fry as the bass in the Saint George.

Thank you for your attention.