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20 Gilsland Farm Road
Falmouth, Maine 04105
207.781.2330
www.maineaudubon.org

MAINE AUDUBON TESTIMONY
IN OPPOSITION TO LD 800, AN ACT TO PREVENT PASSAGE OF ALEWIVES
THROUGH THE GREAT FALLS DAM ON THE ST. CROIX RIVER
BEFORE THE MARINE RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, APRIL 27, 2015

Good morning, Senator Baker, Representative Kumiega, and members of the Marine Resources Committee. My name is Jenn Gray and I represent Maine Audubon and our 20,000 members and supporters in strong opposition to LD 800, An Act to Prevent Passage of Alewives Through the Great Falls Dam on the St. Croix River.

LD 800, as its title suggests, requires the fishway on the Grand Falls Dam located on the St. Croix River to be configured or operated to prevent passage of river herring into the lakes that form the headwaters of the river, including, but not limited to, Grand Falls Flowage, Big Lake, West Grand Lake and Spednic Lake.

In 1995, the Maine Legislature passed a law to prevent upstream fish passage of migratory alewives at two dams on the St. Croix River. This came at the request of some fishing guides in Washington County who believed that the growing numbers of native sea-run alewives had caused the collapse of the watershed's non-native small-mouth bass populations. There was no scientific evidence to support these claims. Starting in spring of 1995, wooden boards were placed in fish ways to stop alewives from moving up river to spawn. This caused the alewife population to crash.

In 2013, the Legislature voted to reopen the St. Croix to alewives. Allowing alewives to move up the St. Croix provides lobster bait as well as food for eagles, osprey, bear, mink and whales. The Legislature did the right thing in opening up the St. Croix to alewives in 2013. We urge you not to take us backwards and vote ought not to pass on LD 800. Thank you for your consideration.

