

PENOBSCOT RIVER RESTORATION TRUST

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Penobscot River Restoration Project Makes Significant Breakthrough – Congress and NOAA Commit \$10 Million

RELEASED: 21 December 2007

Contacts: Laura Rose Day, Executive Director – 207-232-5976
Cheryl Daigle, Outreach Coordinator/Community Liaison – 207-232-9969

Old Town and Augusta, ME—Ten million dollars from the FY08 Omnibus Appropriations Bill passed this week will be directed to the Penobscot River Restoration Project. President Bush signed the bill on Thursday and officials at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) confirmed the agency will direct the funding to the project. The funding was part of the Commerce, Justice, Science Bill included in the omnibus funding measure.

“The plan to restore the Penobscot River is a collaboration that engages communities and enhances the region’s economy, culture, and environment while reviving the Atlantic salmon,” said U.S. Senator Olympia Snowe. “I am pleased that the Administration has agreed that this project deserves a strong financial investment and will provide the resources to move forward with a critical step in the comprehensive restoration project.”

NOAA funding committed toward the project will be used to purchase three dams (Veazie, Great Works, and Howland), begin the engineering and design phase of the project, and allow the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (Penobscot Trust) to move toward implementation. The project will help restore native fisheries by markedly improving access to nearly 1000 miles of key habitat for Atlantic salmon, endangered shortnose sturgeon, American shad, and 8 other species of sea-run fish that once supported a vibrant Penobscot River.

“I am pleased that the Administrator of NOAA gave me his firm commitment to provide the \$10 million that was secured for this critical project in the Senate appropriations process,” said Senator Susan Collins. “This is the most significant river restoration project ever in the eastern United States. I applaud the Penobscot River Restoration Trust for working tirelessly to attract strong federal and private support for this important environmental restoration project.”

The Penobscot Trust, working with the project’s diverse public and private partners, proposes to remove the two dams closest to the sea (Veazie and Great Works) and bypass the Howland dam with a state-of-the-art fishway. Fully implemented, the project will maintain virtually all of the hydroelectric generation produced by PPL in the river through innovative energy enhancements at other dams.

“I grew up along the banks of the Penobscot,” commented U.S Representative Mike Michaud. “For decades, in the state legislature and now in Congress, I have fought to make this river a healthy and vibrant part of all of the communities through which it flows. The funding provided by Congress today will move us even closer to that goal.”

In February 2007, President Bush requested \$10 million dollars from Congress to restore the once-abundant sea-run fisheries of the Penobscot River in Maine, the second largest river in the Northeast. Since that time Congress has included the funding in their FY08 budgets.

“The Penobscot River Project is the national model for fisheries habitat restoration,” U.S. Representative Tom Allen said. “I am pleased that the Delegation was able to work together as a team to secure funding for this project, and I welcome the news that NOAA is fully committed to it. The effort to restore the

Penobscot is critically important to Maine's economy and quality of life but it would not be possible without the hard work of all of the public officials from government at all levels, as well as the landowners, business people, sportsmen and conservationists, and the Penobscot Nation who are all committed to this project."

These new funds, combined with \$10 million in private funds and dollars raised previously from federal sources, move the Penobscot Trust closer to purchase of the dams in 2008.

"NOAA brings notable fisheries expertise and on-the-ground success in Maine, as well as funding, to this remarkable public-private river restoration. NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, working with other agencies, demonstrate the collaborative leadership required for a project of this scale," said Laura Rose Day, Executive Director of the Penobscot Trust. "We are grateful for this investment and will work hard to ensure that the benefits of a restored river are fully realized for Penobscot communities, Maine and the nation."

"This is perhaps the most important freshwater restoration project underway in North America and has far-reaching ecosystem benefits," said Michael Tetreault of The Nature Conservancy. "We commend the efforts of Senators Snowe and Collins who have invested fully in understanding the complexity of the project and of Congressmen Michaud and Allen who have championed the project every step of the way at home and with Congress."

Members of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust, the non-profit tasked with carrying out core elements of the Settlement Agreement, are the Penobscot Indian Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited. Partners include NOAA, the Department of the Interior, dam owner PPL Corporation, and the State of Maine.

"The Penobscot Indian people - whose homeland includes the Penobscot River Watershed - have waited patiently for many years to see the once great fishery runs of the Penobscot restored," said Chief Kirk Francis of the Penobscot Indian Nation. "Today's action by both the Maine Congressional Delegation and NOAA is as good a Christmas present as we could have hoped for. We are most appreciative and we look forward to continuing to work with the fine coalition of partners who also dream of a restored Penobscot River."

"I am extremely pleased with the assurance of \$10 million in federal funding for the Penobscot River Project and for the strong efforts of Maine's Congressional Delegation in partnership with the State of Maine to move forward with this tremendous project," said Governor John Baldacci. "Our natural resource agencies will continue to be instrumental in seeing the project through the implementation and permitting process. Once implemented, the project will lead to a rebirth of the Penobscot River benefiting communities along its shores, restoring sea-run fisheries and maintaining important hydropower generation."

The funding represents the significant breakthrough needed to accomplish the restoration of the Penobscot River through the terms of the Settlement Agreement signed in 2004. "Now there is virtually no doubt that we can move into the implementation phase," said Charles Gauvin of Trout Unlimited. "We are deeply grateful for the efforts made by the White House, Senator Snowe and Collins and of Congressmen Michaud and Allen. Their unwavering support is instrumental."

"A healthy, thriving Penobscot River has been a dream of Mainers for generations, and this money makes that dream one step closer to reality," said Rebecca Wodder, President of American Rivers™. "While there is still much work to be done, I hope everyone will thank their representatives for this incredible gift."