



## **Town of Topsham Little River Fish Passage Barrier Survey**

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Rod Melanson, Planning Director



### **PARTNERS**

Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District (AVSWCD), Atlantic Salmon Federation, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust and Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT)

### **ISSUE AREAS**

Fish Passage, Dam Removal

### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION (completed December 2012)**

A survey of barriers to fish passage in the Little River Watershed was completed. This work follows the removal of a dam on the Little River, the first step in opening 53 square miles of upstream habitat for native anadromous fish species.

Recent fisheries surveys in the Little River have found Atlantic salmon and suitable spawning habitat present as well as habitat for the other diadromous fish species and for cold water aquatic species. There is significant regional interest in restoring spawning and nursery habitat accessibility and reconnecting upstream portions will provide access to historic spawning and rearing habitat and help maintain the health of the ecosystem.

The Town of Topsham, Brunswick Topsham Land Trust (BTLT), Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT), United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation Service (AVSWCS) provided interns as survey team leaders, donating their hours as match (NRCS and USFWS are federal and were not counted in the tally). Trout Unlimited members donated time to assist team leaders, as did citizens who were not members of that organization.

## COASTAL COMMUNITY GRANTS: Coastal Habitat Restoration

Wright Pierce donated their services, providing a GIS map of crossings within the watershed bound copies of the Maine Stream Crossing Survey Manual to participants of the training session. The Atlantic Salmon Federation also volunteered in-kind match, but as it turned out they did not need to be scheduled. This project generated a substantial amount of interest and a significant list of willing volunteers both experienced and new who are now trained in survey procedures and more aware of fish passage issues. It proved to be a model of public and private cooperation and as a result, tasks were completed quickly and economically and public awareness of the issues increased.

### THE CHALLENGE , APPROACH TAKEN AND RESULTS

All tasks of the project were completed as planned.

- A press release notifying the public about the project and the available survey training was issued prior to field work.
- USFWS developed an informational flyer that was used as a handout.
- A full day training session for Maine Stream Crossing Survey methods was held for volunteers and interns. Fifteen attended and two others received training as they worked with interns. The training session was conducted by Erin Witham, KELT with Susan Gammon, AVSWCD, assisting. Wright-Pierce provided bound copies of manuals to participants, other materials were provided by the Town of Topsham and AVSWCD. Survey kits were provided by AVSWCD, Wright-Pierce, Topsham, and USFWS and were used throughout the season.
- 48 crossings were checked, of which three had no structures present. A few sites were inaccessible or missed and may be checked as needed if possible. One site was checked and a barrier was found (beaver dam) but the dam survey was not completed and is not included in the summary, thus that too may be completed at a later date if needed. One site has a dam (D1031) associated with a culvert on a private drive and a beaver dam in the vicinity, though the summary includes just the culvert. Summaries and pictures of completed site surveys were compiled.
- Of the 45 surveyed sites with structures, 17 barriers were identified. 18 were classified as potential barriers, one was questionable and nine were not classified as a barrier.
- USFWS reviewed data, entered it into the Maine GIS database and prepared the final GIS map.
- AVSWCD made additional site to verify data when questions arose during review.
- Final report was prepared and distributed to partners and to towns.



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### NEXTSTEPS

All towns and collaborating partners will be sent the summary and this report. The towns will be asked to consider replacing priority culverts and a similar request will be made of the state for those on state roads. AVSWCD is considering holding a stream crossing and culvert installation workshop, which will include culvert sizing, however that is funding dependent. Technical assistance can be provided to the towns on a fee for service basis and that option will be made available. AVSWCD as well as other partners will continue to search for funding to provide incentives to help towns and landowners restore connectivity, though this is affected by the economy and funding is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain as the need increases.

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