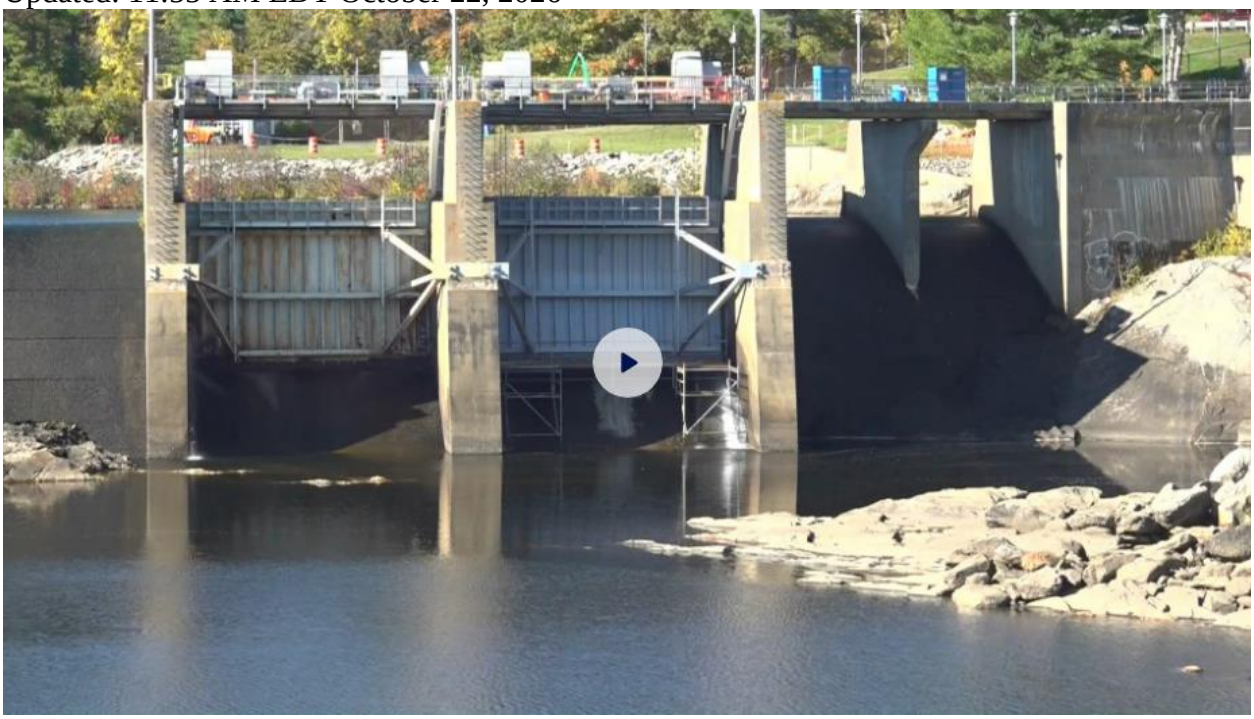
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Conservation group seeks changes to Brunswick dam after alewife die-off

Conservationists have filed a federal complaint saying thousands of alewives were killed going through the dam.

Author: Katie Delaney
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BRUNSWICK, Maine — Conservationists are calling for changes to be made to the Brunswick-Topsham dam after dead fish washed up along the Androscoggin River last week.

The nonprofit Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) filed a complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), saying it appears thousands

of migrating alewives were killed by turbines in the hydroelectric dam that were supposed to be turned off.

Ed Friedman, FOMB chairman, said migratory fish must pass through an 18-inch-wide pipe in the dam, but there are turbines on either side which can slice the fish.

The owner of the dam, Brookfield Renewable, said it was alerted that more than a million fish would be passing through.

“As is the protocol for such situations, we implemented overnight operational shutdowns at the Brunswick Hydroelectric Project to facilitate the safe passage of the large number of out-migrating river herring expected to enter the river,” a spokesperson for Brookfield said.

But the next morning, fish mortality was observed downstream of the dam. So, crews expanded those measures and shut down generation completely for a few days, according to the spokesperson.

Friedman said he believes at some point at least one turbine turned on and killed the fish that went through.

“Not only is there a physical problem there, but there's a protocol problem as well,” he said. “Protocols didn’t work.”

Friedman said it is particularly concerning because alewives are important for the ecosystem, and a preferred bait for lobstermen.

“The movement of fish is so important to all of us. These rivers are alive, they are Maine's lifeblood, okay? And we need to keep the blood flowing,” he said.

The Brookfield spokesperson said, “Protection of migratory fish species remains an important operational priority,” adding, “We are continuing to review the circumstances and will work closely with state and federal resource agencies to better understand what occurred."

FOMB would like to see the dam in Brunswick changed or taken down all together.

“Different kinds of passage, there's just different ways to do things,” Friedman said. “What we're trying to do is ensure that these dams have safe, effective, and efficient fish passage.”

Brookfield’s operating license expires in 2029.

In the coming years, FERC will decide whether to renew it, and what conditions must come with that.

In its complaint to the commission, FERC encouraged changes to the dam’s fish passage system be considered.

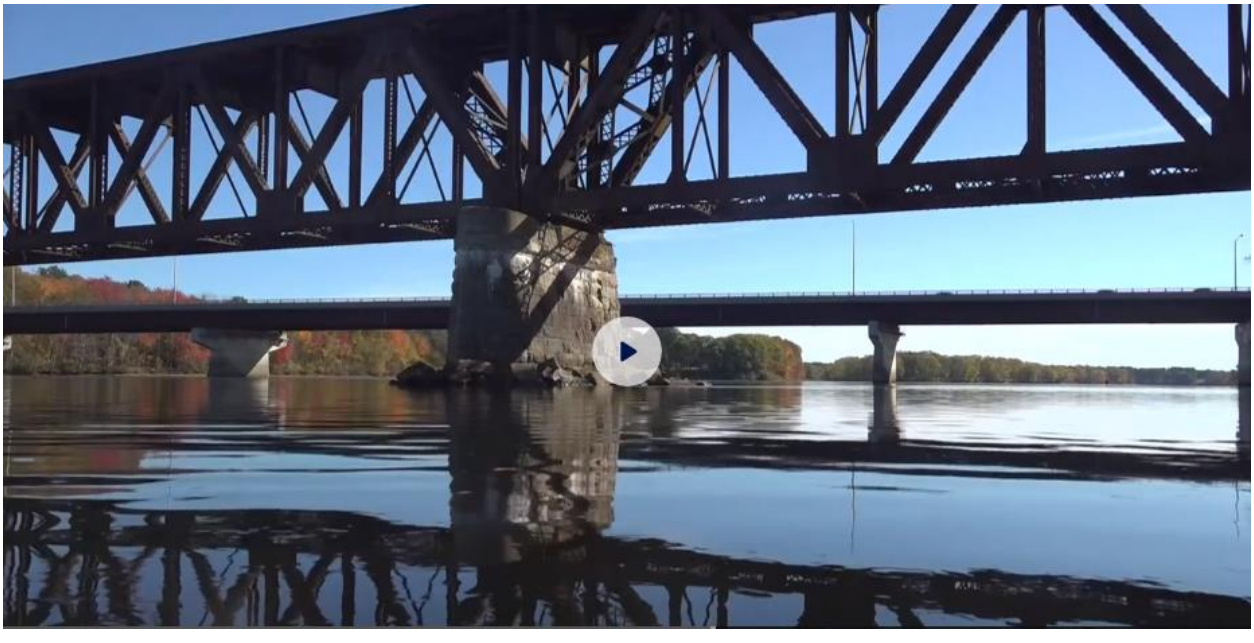
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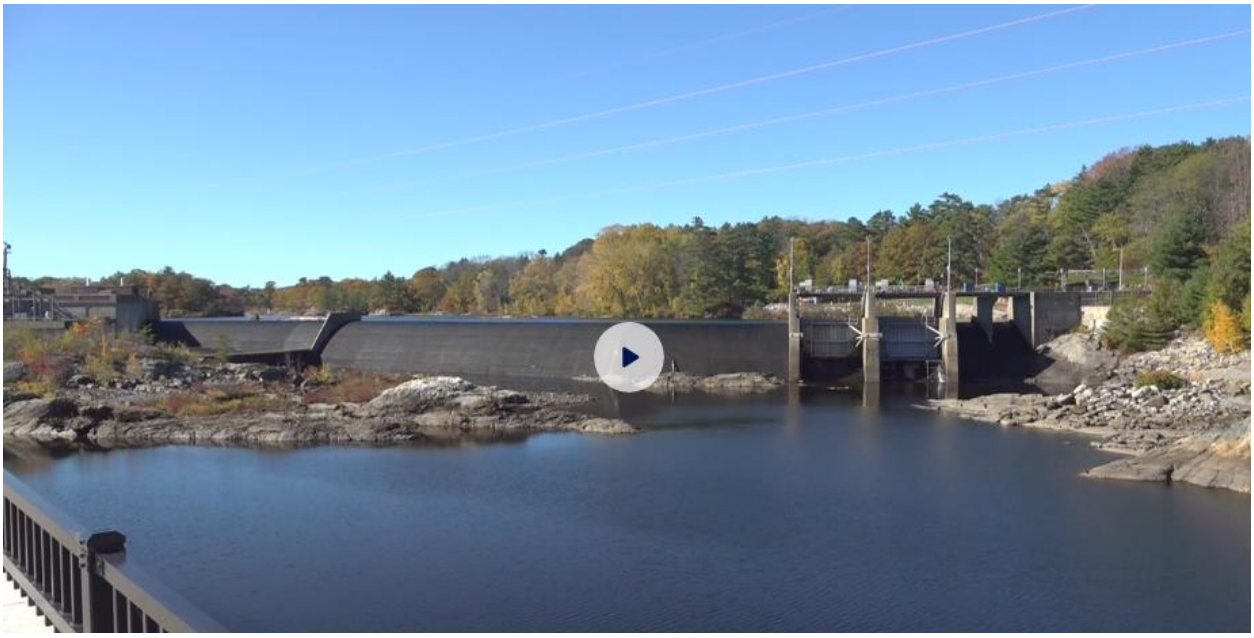



Courtesy: Friends of Merrymeeting Bay


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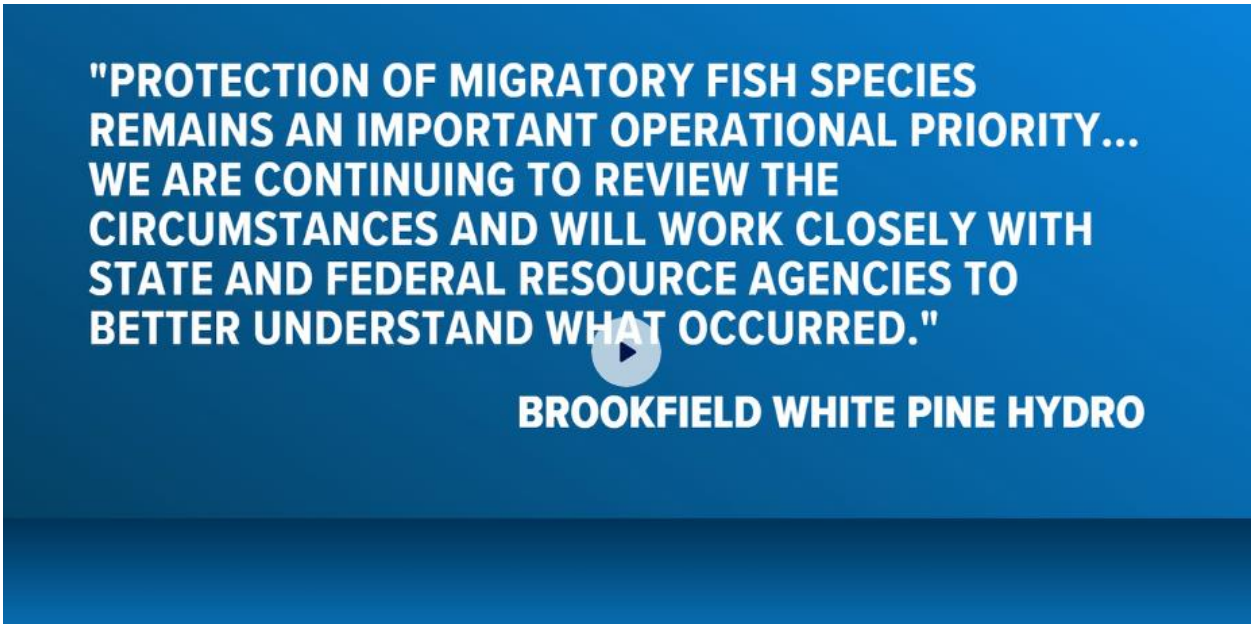



Turbine clogged with eels. Note eel skin stretched across shaft.
S. O. Conte Anadromous Fish Restoration Center
Old Problems, New Solutions


Courtesy: Friends of Merrymeeting Bay


Courtesy: Friends of Merrymeeting Bay




"PROTECTION OF MIGRATORY FISH SPECIES
REMAINS AN IMPORTANT OPERATIONAL PRIORITY...
WE ARE CONTINUING TO REVIEW THE
CIRCUMSTANCES AND WILL WORK CLOSELY WITH
STATE AND FEDERAL RESOURCE AGENCIES TO
BETTER UNDERSTAND WHAT OCCURRED."
BROOKFIELD WHITE PINE HYDRO

Not!