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Federal complaint filed after thousands of dead fish found in Brunswick

Story by Jamie Azulay



This photo captured on Oct. 13, 2026, shows some of the thousands of dead alewives that washed up along the shores of the Androscoggin River in Brunswick, Maine.

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay filed a complaint with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) regarding a massive fish kill along the banks of the Androscoggin River in a 1/2-mile stretch near Pinette Landing Park.

In the complaint written to Secretary Debbie-Anne Reese, the environmental conservation non-profit explains they were made aware of thousands of dead young-of-the-year alewives on Sunday, Oct. 11. The fish appeared to have been decapitated or killed by concussive strikes and barotrauma caused by the dam's turbines.

Ed Friedman, chair of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, wrote that they were in contact with Brookfield, and company officials said they were alerted to the migration Friday morning. The complaint says a public works crew told the company the fish were released from Sabattus Pond.

Brookfield officials say a nighttime shutdown was initiated Friday to allow for safe passage, but around 10 a.m. Saturday fish techs noticed a small number of dead fish. By 2:15 p.m. company officials had initiated a 24-hour shutdown and remained shut down through Monday afternoon.

"Clearly what they did wasn't enough," Friedman told Maine's Total Coverage. "So, we have thousands and thousands of dead alewives on the shore." He's hoping the complaint will lead to infrastructure changes amidst the re-licensing process.

He wrote, "In normal conditions, the only way for migratory fish to pass downstream at Brunswick is through an 18" pipe with a grate over the upstream end and flows of 40 cubic feet per second." Friedman says this passage is situated between turbines and is not easily navigated by migrating species.

"It's kind of like Russian roulette," he said. He believes the health of a river is comparable to the human body. Friedman questioned, "Do you want plaque in your arteries? That's what dams do. A dam with no passage is the same as blocking off your artery, and you have a heart attack, right?"

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay wants all safe passage possibilities to be thoroughly vetted.

Brookfield Renewables did not respond to Maine's Total Coverage's request for comment.