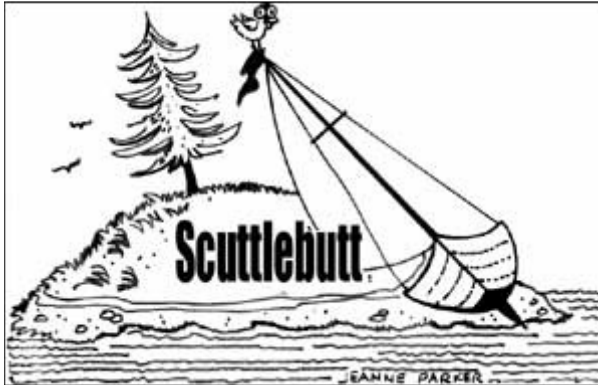


Knox Village Soup

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Apr 30, 2011
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Environmentalists and fishermen challenge Maine law

PORTLAND — Fishermen and river herring advocates are challenging a 2008 Maine law that blocks alewives and river herring from 98 percent of their native habitat in the St. Croix River Basin, according to a press release from the advocacy group EarthJustice.

Two Maine fisheries officials responsible for placing physical barriers known as stop logs that prevent fish from migrating past the Grand Falls Dam on the St. Croix River are named in the suit filed April 22 in U.S. District Court.

The 2008 Alewife Law directs Defendants Norman H. Olsen, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and Chandler E. Woodcock, Commissioner of the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, to eradicate alewives and blueback herring from their historic spawning and nursery habitat in the St. Croix River basin, the press release said.

The case specifically challenges a 2008 Maine law ordering Maine fish and wildlife officials to prevent alewives from migrating past the Grand Falls Dam.

"Prior to implementation of a similar law in 1995, the St. Croix River contained perhaps the largest population of alewives in North America and now only a small remnant remains," the press release said. "The law was put in place at the request of sport fishermen who catch non-native species of bass in that area with the mistaken belief that alewives were negatively affecting their Maine's upstream sport fisheries."

Alewives play a keystone role in the river and coastal ocean ecosystem, serving as food for many other species of fish, marine mammals, and birds. They are fished for by commercial and recreational fishermen, and are valuable to fisherman and related coastal economies as bait for lobster and recreational fishermen, and as forage for commercially valuable species like cod, halibut, and tuna.