



Photo: Martin Neptune

Pəskehtəkək

Joining of the Branches

Winter 2006 ~ Issue 1

Penobscot Indian Nation
 Department of Natural Resources
www.penobscotnation.org/DNR/DNR1.htm

ONE STEP CLOSER TO GETTING THOSE DAMS OUT - PENOBSCOT NATION HELPS PUSH FOR REQUEST OF TEN MILLION FROM CONGRESS

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"Nahmun stopped fishing for a moment and lay back in the canoe, watching the tops of the trees go silently by. As he drifted slowly along with the current, he recalled a story his father told him about the changes brought to the river by the European settlers many generations ago."

This Penobscot man, in a story written by tribal elder Butch Phillips, remembers when the Penobscot River was taking care of the people and all their relations. He also reflects on the change that was brought about since Europeans arrived. "The change had a drastic effect on the People and the creatures. The caribou and the beaver went away. The eagle and the osprey went away. The salmon, shad and alewives went away. The People went away from the river also. The sacred circle of life was broken. The ancestors witnessed the destruction, and they wept, but their tears couldn't flush the poisons from the river. Their protests could not stop the dams and mills or the increasing population along the river. With this change came a change to the way of life of the People and to their traditions as well."

However, like Nahmun, many modern-day tribal leaders continue to believe in the sacredness of the Penobscot River and continue to fight for her protection. Butch, as a Penobscot River Restoration Ambassador, and John Banks, as the Director of the Penobscot Nation's Department of Natural Resources, have been integral supporters of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust (PRRT). The PRRT is a nonprofit corporation whose mission is to implement the Penobscot River Restoration Agreement (www.penobscotriver.org) of purchasing and removing dams from the Penobscot River.

On January 26, 2007 it was announced that the Bush administration would be requesting \$10 million from Congress to support this restoration project. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) requested this money in it's budget for next fiscal year, providing \$8 million for dam acquisition and \$2 million to NOAA's Office of Habitat Conservation for technical assistance, pre- and post- removal studies, and engineering.

"For more than 10,000 years, the Penobscot River has been the heart of our homeland," said Penobscot Indian Nation Chief Kirk Francis. "Our identity as a tribe is deeply intertwined with the health of the river. The river's restoration is critical to our cultural survival. We commend the administration for its support for this and

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we express our appreciation to the Maine Congressional Delegation who have been so supportive and encouraged the Administration to continue funding this project."

"The White House and NOAA are indicating to Congress that the success of this innovative partnership among business, state, tribal and federal government, and citizens to restore the Penobscot River is of great national value," said Laura Rose Day, Executive Director, Penobscot River Restoration Trust. "Together, we will restore the Penobscot River system and in doing so we will renew fisheries, wildlife, and the cultural, recreational, economic and other values that the river can offer to the people of Maine and the nation. The Trust is thrilled that the Administration and NOAA are supporting this remarkable project. "

The Penobscot Trust holds an option to purchase the dams for approximately \$25 million and is actively seeking acquisition funds from a combination of public and private sources. Over \$7.5 million has been raised from private sources. Maine's Congressional Delegation has been instrumental in securing more than \$4.5 million dollars in federal funds to date. Additional support has come from a wide array of supporters, including the state of Maine, tribes, businesses, and local, state and national organizations.

The members of the Penobscot Trust include the Penobscot Indian Nation, American Rivers, Atlantic Salmon Federation, Natural Resources Council of Maine, Maine Audubon, The Nature Conservancy and Trout Unlimited.

"This is perhaps the most important fresh-water restoration project underway in North America," said Michael Tetreault, Executive Director of The Nature Conservancy in Maine. "The benefits of the project are far reaching for species including federally endangered shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic sturgeon, river herring, striped bass, tomcod, rainbow smelt and Atlantic salmon. In this region where culture, tradition, business, and recreation all depend on a thriving Penobscot, the benefits to people will be tremendous."

Rose Day praised the "steadfast bipartisan support for the project and the continued leadership from the entire Maine delegation that has been critical to our attracting this type of significant federal commitment. Their support will make a difference to the future of this great Maine river."

In a press release, Senator Collins called the funding inclusion in the President's budget "excellent news that will help this extremely important project move forward." She noted that the \$10 million in funding will provide significant federal cost-share and will help ensure improved access to nearly 1,000 miles of habitat for endangered Atlantic salmon and habitat access for other fish species will be improved.

"This announcement comes on the heels of news last week that the Penobscot River Restoration Project received a \$1 million grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Coastal Wetlands Program and we are pleased with this demonstration of growing federal support for the project," said Senator Snowe.

"NOAA's commitment to this project is great news for the Penobscot River," stated Governor Baldacci. "The benefits of this landmark conservation project to the State of Maine are far reaching. It proves that we can balance fisheries conservation with our need of hydropower." The state has committed to seek \$3-5 million to help communities in the region reap many anticipated benefits of the restored river.

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In Butch's story, Nahmun reflects on this kind of progress. "Finally people were becoming aware of the serious destruction to the river. They came to understand what the Native People had been telling them for so long. 'If you cause harm to Mother Earth, you will eventually cause harm to mankind.' A serious effort had begun to reverse the damage to the river. The beaver, eagle and osprey came back and the People came back to the river also. Efforts are underway to remove two dams and to improve another so the sea-run fish can once again enter reservation waters on their way to their ancient spawning areas. The young Indian man thought how happy the ancestors must be to see the river cleansing itself and to see the people once again traveling up river to hunt fish and gather plants.

Nahmun thought to himself. How can the ancestors be happy. They remember when unknown diseases killed so many of our people nearly four hundred years ago, and there are still unseen poisons in the river that are causing suffering for the People. Dioxin, mercury and cadmium are in the flesh of the fish and game that cause sickness and death to the people. Nahmun held up a two pound bass for a few moments before releasing it. He thought about the present dangers that still exist from eating the fish from these waters. There have been great strides to restore this river and we can be proud of the many accomplishments, but until we can safely eat the fish again as our ancestors did, the precious Circle of Life of this river will not be completed.

Nahmun carefully released the bass back into the river and as it swam away, he said to the fish, 'Woli Woni' (Thank You). And all my Relations, 'Woli Woni.'"



Art: James Eric Francis

Green Cleaning Tip

Cleaning appliances and ovens without the use of harsh chemicals can be as easy as this:

Salt
Hot water

Pour salt and hot water over grease and grime. Let sit for a couple of hours or overnight before scrubbing with a mild abrasive pad. Pour salt directly onto the grease when freshly spilled and come back to it later.