



**GARDINER CITY COUNCIL
AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**



Meeting Date	12/01/2021	Department	City Council
Agenda Item	4.b) Presentation from Upstream – an update		
Est. Cost			

Background Information

Members from Upstream will be attending this meeting to give an update on their progress. Please review the attached brochure that introduces this organization. They will have a video to present. Please find attached to this agenda item, some documentation that explains the project.

Requested Action	There is no action required except to answer any questions that Gardiner City Council may have for Upstream.
City Manager and/or Finance Review	
Council Vote/ Action Taken	
Departmental Follow-Up	

City Clerk Use Only	1 st Reading _____	Advertised _____	EFFECTIVE DATE _____
	2 nd Reading _____	Advertised _____ w/in 15 Days	
	Final to Dept _____	Updated Book _____	Online _____

STATE OF MAINE



JANET T. MILLS
GOVERNOR

PATRICK KELIHER
COMMISSIONER
DEPT. OF MARINE RESOURCES

MELANIE LOYZIM
COMMISSIONER
DEPT. OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

JUDY A. CAMUSO
COMMISSIONER
DEPT. OF INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

April 27, 2021

Via Email

To: Municipal Officials

Anne Davis adavis@gardinermaine.com
Kelly Weissenfels k.weissenfels@litchfieldmaine.org
Lauria Loon laurisaloon@richmondmaine.com
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Linda Cohen lcohen@monmouthme.org
Eric Dyer info@readfieldmaine.org;

From: Commissioner Melanie Loyzim, Commissioner Patrick Keliher, Commissioner Judy A. Camuso

Subject: Water Quality and Alewife Restoration in Cobbossee Watershed

Dear Municipal Officials,

We are writing regarding on-going discussions relating to water quality in the Cobbossee watershed and concerns about the restoration of alewives. Our agencies each have different but connected missions to protect and conserve the waters, lands, and wildlife of our State. We realize that restoration of alewives, a native sea-run species in Maine, has brought up many questions in the Cobbossee watershed and we understand and appreciate the concerns for lake water quality raised by the Cobbossee Watershed District (CWD). CWD has done great work throughout the lakes and ponds in the watershed over many years. We share their objective of protecting and restoring lake water quality, but we do not see this as mutually exclusive to the objective of restoring a keystone fish species. Alewives are part of the cultural legacy of towns all along the drainage, as demonstrated by 1800's citizen and town petitions to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for fish passage after dam construction in Gardiner. Restoring native sea-run alewives and other native species can provide many ecological, social, and economic benefits throughout all the natural systems where they are found currently.

We recognize that there are complexities that will require thorough reviews and which will need on-going monitoring, with all three agencies working together. We believe that with proper planning and management, the goals of maintaining water quality, lake water levels, dam operational flexibility, robust recreational fishing opportunities, and restoring runs of native sea-run alewives can and will be met. Maine IFW, DEP, and DMR support restoration of native fisheries into Pleasant Pond as Phase I of the project, which will take a number of years to complete. Maine DMR believes that a fishery can be developed focused initially in Pleasant Pond after completing upstream fish passage. This would provide municipal revenue and an opportunity to continue to

study these reintroductions at this location and throughout Maine to best inform future decisions about potential Phase II restoration, upstream of at least two additional dams into Cobbossee and Annabessacook Lakes and possibly other historic ponds. Any concerns related to water quality or recreational resident fisheries will be coordinated between the agencies and managed responsibly to ensure all the natural resources of the state are healthy and sustainable.

Our agencies will continue to work on developing the best science regarding reintroduction of alewives, protecting water quality, and sustaining important resident fisheries. We will work with agencies, towns, community organizations, environmental organizations, lake managers, and others to come up with an adaptive management approach. We are fully committed to on-going discussions on these topics. Our goal is to develop better community understanding and support for developing sustainable and productive plans based on solid science and civic-minded engagement.

Sincerely,



Melanie Loyzim
Commissioner
Maine Department of Environmental Protection



Patrick Keliher
Commissioner
Maine Department of Marine Resources



Judith Camuso
Commissioner
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife



April 9, 2021

Mr. Sean Ledwin
Director of Sea-Run Fisheries and Habitat Division
Maine Department of Marine Resources
21 State House Station
Augusta, Maine, 04333-0021

Dear Mr. Ledwin,

The City of Gardiner is actively revitalizing the Cobbossee Corridor following its Master Plan that was first developed in 2005, updated in 2014 and is being revised in 2021.

In 2005, the plan outlined the cultural and economic development of the Cobbossee Stream Corridor, citing the removal of Gardiner Paperboard Dam and in subsequent revisions of the 2005 plan, envisioned a recreation destination on the stream with unique multi-use streamside trails.

Since then, on three separate occasions in 2016, 2017 and 2018 the Gardiner City Council has voted in support of fish passage at Gardiner's three downtown dams, Gardiner Paperboard, American Tissue and New Mills. The city has continued the work of developing the Cobbossee Multi-Use Pedestrian Path and has supported community efforts on the Harrison Avenue Nature Trail to create the vision of a revitalized corridor on Cobbossee Stream. With the support of Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) and the completion of fish passage at Gardiner Paperboard Dam this long-term goal can be realized.

In April 2017, the City of Gardiner submitted comments to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) on the relicensing of the middle dam, American Tissue Hydroelectric Project, in support of fish passage and public recreation on Cobbossee Stream, which resulted in the construction of downstream fish passage in 2020.

On January 13, 2021, the Greater Atlantic Region Division of NOAA published a newsletter featuring Cobbossee Stream:

“The City of Gardiner, NOAA Fisheries, the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and a local conservation group are exploring fish passage options at the Gardiner Paperboard Dam. They have started conversations with the current owner. If fish passage at the dam can be improved, NOAA Fisheries can use its authority to require upstream fish passage at the American Tissue Dam. In addition, a fish passage analysis at the New Mills Dam has been initiated.”

NOAA shares the City of Gardiner’s vision for Cobbossee Stream and has indicated that funding may be available to help with trail construction in conjunction with fish passage construction.

Restoring fish passage on Cobbossee Stream would be an historic event; returning the millions of alewives and blueback herring to the stream and watershed for the first time since the 1700s. Since Cobbossee Stream flows through downtown Gardiner and once fish passage is achieved it would become a unique showcase and an important recreation destination in our state, leading to direct economic benefit for the city and region. It is also our understanding that a harvest of the returning fish could lead to substantial revenues for the city.

The City of Gardiner, in numerous Cobbossee Stakeholders meetings beginning in 2019 has been assured the funding for fish passage at Gardiner Paperboard and New Mills Dam would be through state, federal grants and private sources and would not add to the economic burden of the city.

The City of Gardiner supports the Maine Department of Marine Resources efforts to restore fish passage in downtown Gardiner. Furthermore, the city urges (DMR) to seek an immediate solution for fish passage at Gardiner Paperboard Dam. This dam is the first impediment to returning fish and is a necessary step in fulfilling the vision outlined in the Cobbossee Corridor Master Plan of a vibrant, walkable, engaging recreation destination that brings cultural and economic significance to our lovely river city.

Sincerely,



Anne Davis
Acting City Manager
Gardiner, Maine

10 WAYS TO HELP THE LITTLE FISH HOME!



Each spring millions of alewives, *Alosa pseudoharengus* return to the Kennebec River from the Atlantic Ocean. Thousands make a left hand swing into Cobbossee Stream where they need our help navigating the three downtown dams in Gardiner, Maine to complete their journey home to Pleasant Pond. Each female will lay 80,000 eggs and then return to the sea. Here are 10 ways to help the little fish!

1.

Pick up trash along the stream.

Fish mistake trash for food and birds get tangled in fishing line. Picking up litter keeps our streams, rivers and oceans clean and healthy. On Earth Day, each April, Upstream organizes a stream clean-up. Join us!



2.

It is fun to notice!

Take a notebook next time you hike along a stream, river or wetland. Your observations of plants, fish and animals will give you a greater understanding of the natural environment and can inform scientific discovery and decision making. Post to Upstream's facebook site or to the citizen scientist National Phenology Project, Nature's Notebook, www.usanpn.org/natures_notebook.

3.

Learn more about sea-run fish.

Six migrating fish species: alewife, American eel, American shad, blueback herring, striped bass, and rainbow smelt are currently managed by the Maine Department of Marine Resources for Cobbossee Stream. Learn more about these fascinating fish and the restoration happening in our watersheds at:

mainerivers.org

<http://www.downeastfisheriestrail.org/>

<http://www.seagrant.umaine.edu/>

<https://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/feature-story/finding-next-sebasticook>



4.

Investigate local fish passage sites.

Check out the unique solutions during the spring run in May at Damariscotta Mills, <https://damariscottamills.org/>, Webber Pond in Vassalboro, Benton Falls, Togus Pond in Augusta,

Somesville Mud Pond in Mt. Desert or Nequasset Lake in Woolwich. Watch restoration in action:

[https://www.kennebecestuary.org/nequasset-restoration/Cool Little Culvert video](https://www.kennebecestuary.org/nequasset-restoration/Cool-Little-Culvert-video)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_rjQPte9fY

Do one small thing for fish a day!



5.

Add your voice to the ever louder call for fish passage on Cobbossee.

Inspire your group to be an advocate for the stream. Would your church, scouting group, bowling team, fishing friends create a fundraiser or work with Upstream to increase awareness of migratory fish on Cobbossee Stream?

Contact Upstream at upstreamcobbossee@gmail.com

7.

Be part of something global!

Join in the world celebration for fish migration in the spring on even numbered years with World Fish Migration Day. Gardiner, Maine is a world fish migration site! Learn more at www.worldfishmigrationday.com/home

9.

Volunteer for fun!

Help on a project with Kennebec Land Trust www.tkl.org, Friends of Cobbossee Watershed www.watershedfriends.com, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay www.friendsofmerrymeetingbay.org or Upstream www.facebook.com/alewivesupstreamcobbosseecontee. These local non-profits make a difference in protecting and restoring our watersheds.

6.

Is writing your thing?

Contact local city officials at **Gardiner City Hall**, 6 Church Street, Gardiner, ME 04345; the **Commissioner of Maine Department of Marine Resources**, 21 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0021; or write a letter to the editor, **Kennebec Journal**, 36 Anthony Ave. Augusta, ME 04330 to share your concerns about fish passage on Cobbossee Stream.

8.

Join the adventure.

Upstream meets the first Thursday afternoon of the month. All are welcome to join the lively discussion and the win win solution for the fish, the watershed and the community. Email upstreamcobbossee@gmail.com for times and location.

10.

Donate to the efforts for fish passage on Cobbossee.

Upstream, located in Gardiner, is a 501(c)(3) non-profit accepting donations for fish passage. Send donations to **Upstream**, 23 Central Street, Gardiner, ME 04345. Thank you for your support and caring for the little fish.

TOGETHER WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

Upstream

Dedicated to restoring fish passage and ecological health to Cobbossee Stream.
upstreamcobbossee@gmail.com
[facebook/upstreamalewivescobbosseecontee](https://www.facebook.com/upstreamalewivescobbosseecontee)
23 Central Street, Gardiner, Maine 04345,
207-582-0213

