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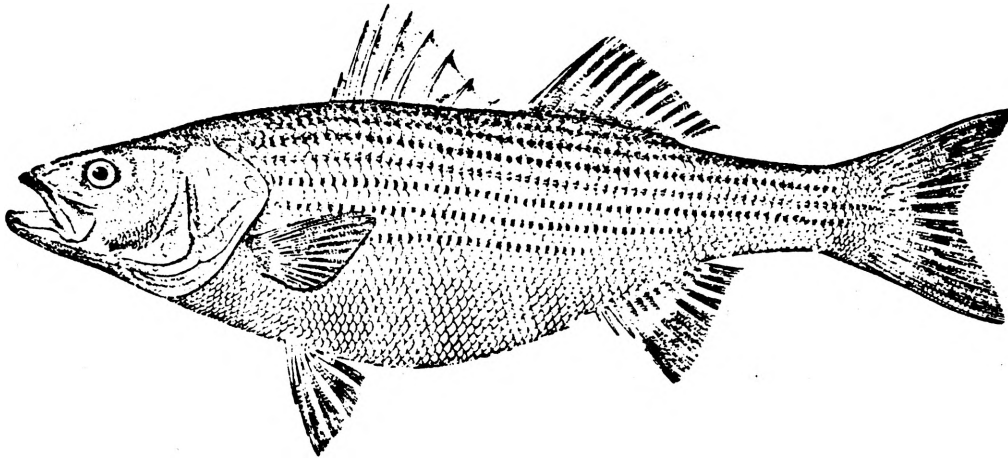
Kennebec River Striped Bass Restoration Program

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Department of Marine Resources
State House Station #21
Augusta, Maine 04333

KENNEBEC RIVER
STRIPED BASS
RESTORATION PROGRAM



Prepared By: Thomas S. Squiers, Jr.
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STRIPED BASS RESTORATION

The Kennebec River once supported abundant runs of anadromous (sea-run) fish species such as the striped bass, American shad, smelt, Atlantic salmon, alewife, and sturgeon, before they were decimated by impassable dams and severe water pollution. The striped bass resource was dealt a severe blow when the Augusta dam was completed in 1837. Historically, striped bass migrated to Waterville on the mainstem and up the Sebasticook River a short distance. The construction of the Augusta dam eliminated approximately fifty percent of the spawning habitat for striped bass in the Kennebec River. Striped bass continued to reproduce in the twenty mile stretch of tidal freshwater between the Augusta dam and the outlet of Merrymeeting Bay until around 1930, when it is thought that increased pollution from the Kennebec and Androscoggin Rivers exterminated the last population of striped bass native to the State of Maine.

Since 1977, water quality has improved significantly because of pollution abatement efforts. Increased public interest in restoring a native run of striped bass to the Kennebec River prompted the Department of Marine Resources to initiate an experimental stocking of striped bass in 1982. That year, the Department of Marine Resources successfully transferred 319 juvenile striped bass captured in the Hudson River to the Androscoggin River. In 1983, an additional 572 juvenile striped bass were transported from the Hudson River to the Kennebec River estuary. The restoration program was expanded in 1984 to include striped bass fry which were obtained from Multi-Aquaculture Systems, Inc. and raised to fall fingerlings by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service at its North Attleboro National Fish Hatchery. The fry were purchased with funds raised by a private organization known as the "Committee to Restore Resident Stripers to the Kennebec River in Maine." A total of 7500 four-week old fry were obtained from Multi-Aquaculture Systems, Inc. and transported to the North Attleboro Fish Hatchery. From this lot,

2306 fall fingerling striped bass were stocked in the Kennebec River at Richmond. An additional 200 fall fingerling striped bass were transferred from Ecological Analysts' Verplanck Striped Bass Fish Hatchery on the Hudson River to the Kennebec River at Richmond. In 1985 and 1986, striped bass fry were procured from Ecological Analysts' Hudson River Striped Bass Hatchery at Verplanck with funds provided by the "Committee to Restore Resident Stripers to the Kennebec River in Maine" and transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife North Attleboro Fish Hatchery where they were raised to fall fingerlings. In 1985, a total of 46,759 striped bass fingerlings were stocked in the Kennebec River at Richmond. In 1986 a total of 30,246 fall fingerling striped bass were stocked in the estuarial complex of the Kennebec River estuary, including the lower Androscoggin River and the Eastern River. No fry were available in 1987.

In 1987, marine biologists from the Maine Department of Marine Resources captured juvenile striped bass, 2-4" in length, in Merrymeeting Bay. This represents the first documented spawning success of striped bass in the Kennebec River in over 50 years. It is hoped that as more stocked striped bass mature and spawn that a resident striped bass population will become reestablished. The Department of Marine Resources plans to continue stocking hatchery-reared striped bass fingerlings for at least three more years. In addition, DMR will be initiating a survey to delineate the striped bass spawning area(s).

For further information on the striped bass restoration program, contact the Anadromous Fish Division, Maine Department of Marine Resources, State House, Station #21, Augusta, Maine, 04333

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