

# AMERICA'S GREAT OUTDOORS: Salazar Highlights Two Proposed Projects in Maine to Promote Outdoor Recreation, Conservation

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## Projects Will Be Part of 50-State Report

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**WASHINGTON** — Just days before the release of a 50-state report outlining some of the country's most promising ways to reconnect Americans to the natural world, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar today highlighted two projects in the state of Maine that will be included in the final report — representing what states believe are among the best investments in the nation to support a healthy, active population, conserve wildlife and working lands, and create travel, tourism and outdoor-recreation jobs across the country.

Restoring the Penobscot River and the partnerships from Keeping Maine's Forests are among 100 projects nationwide that will be highlighted in next week's report — two in every state — as part of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative to establish a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda and reconnect Americans to the outdoors.

The report is a result of 50 meetings with governors and stakeholders held by Salazar and other senior Interior officials to solicit ideas on how to best implement AGO in their states. These projects were identified for their potential to conserve important lands and build recreation opportunities and economic growth for the surrounding communities as part of close engagement with Gov. Paul LePage and the state of Maine, as well as private landowners, local- and tribal-elected officials, community organizations and outdoor-recreation and conservation stakeholders. The full 50-state report will be released in the coming weeks.

"Under the America's Great Outdoors Initiative, we are listening to the people of Maine and communities across America and working with them on locally-based projects that will conserve the beauty and health of our land and water and open up more opportunities for people to enjoy them," Salazar said. "My staff and I have been asking each governor for the most promising projects to support in their states, and we will do all we can to help move them forward."

The two projects in Maine highlighted by Salazar in the forthcoming report are:

## **Penobscot River Restoration Project**

The Penobscot River and its tributaries flow from the North Woods through the heart of Maine into Penobscot Bay. Maine's largest watershed provides a critical link between fresh water and the sea and is also a valuable natural resource in energy production through hydroelectric dams. The Penobscot River Restoration Project is a landmark conservation effort to restore natural processes and ecological benefits to the watershed through dam removal.

As the result of a multi-party hydropower settlement agreement, the Penobscot River Restoration Trust purchased three dams owned by PPL Corp., with plans to remove the Veazie and Great Works dams and to build a fish bypass at the Howland Project. This will restore hundreds of miles of migration and spawning habitat for 11 species of sea-run fish, including the endangered Atlantic salmon and shortnose sturgeon. This habitat includes the ancestral home and present-day reservation of the Penobscot Indian Nation, who will benefit both economically and culturally from the return of the fish. PPL will increase energy production at five existing sites on the river, so energy production levels will remain the same. PRRP has secured the permits necessary for dam decommissioning and removal.

Great Works Dam removal is expected to begin in 2012, and removal of Veazie Dam will start in 2014. Although national, state, and local partners have raised \$25 million for the project, additional financial and technical resources are needed to complete the removal of both dams and to construct the fish by-pass. The project has been a high priority for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which has invested \$2 million in the project in the past four years.

## **Keeping Maine's Forests**

Keeping Maine's Forests is a partnership of forest landowners, recreationists, conservation and environmental organizations, and state and federal agencies working to demonstrate new ways of promoting forest stewardship. The group's goal is to enhance the forest-based economy in rural communities while preserving the wild, healthy nature of Maine's forests. Proposed pilot projects are already poised to have a significant impact on wildlife habitat across the state.

The Downeast Project in eastern Maine builds on an existing base of conserved lands to protect white-tailed deer habitat and endangered Atlantic salmon rivers. In western Maine, the Western Mountains and Lakes Pilot Project will protect high-value recreation land central to the state's tourism industry. The project's holistic approach to forest conservation is advantageous for the entire state. Economics, recreation, and youth-engagement are the priorities in this whole-landscape conservation initiative. The project advances the landscape conservation goals of AGO while operating on a community-led, voluntary basis.

Keeping Maine's Forests is a pilot project set forth by the New England Governors' Conference. The initiative's larger goals include heavy engagement with private landowners, conservation incentives that reward stewardship and best management practices, and support for local timber industries to encourage the benefits of responsible forestry. The landscape-level approach to Maine's effort is intended to be scalable to all of New England, eventually providing a model for preserving the integrity of all of the region's forests.

The report will also include potential actions by Interior and its bureaus to support the projects identified. In Maine, for example, the Department could provide technical and financial assistance to public and private agencies to conserve working forests and restore healthy populations of native brook trout and salmon. At the Penobscot River, it could also continue to provide technical and financial assistance in support of the Penobscot River Restoration Project.

The Department of the Interior will work with each of its key bureaus — including the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service — to direct available resources and personnel to make these projects a reality.

“The America’s Great Outdoors Initiative turns the conventional wisdom about the federal government’s role in conservation on its head,” Salazar said. “Rather than dictate policies or conservation strategies from Washington, it supports grassroots, locally driven initiatives.”

For more information on the President’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative, click [here](#).

To view a map of the projects already announced, click [here](#).

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