

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

IFW Fish Presentation for the Bristol Mills Dam Advisory Committee

Bristol, Maine – March 28, 2017 - Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (IFW) Region B Fisheries Biologist D. Jason Seiders presented information about freshwater fishes in the Pemaquid Watershed to the Bristol Mills Dam Advisory Committee at its most recent meeting on March 28. This information, together with information from other Dam Committee meetings, will be integrated into the Committee's report to the Town selectmen presenting a series of options on improvements to the dam and fish passage at the site.

The Pemaquid River Watershed supports a wide variety of native freshwater fishes, including highly sought-after eastern brook trout, as well as pumpkinseed and redbreast sunfish, yellow and white perch, white sucker, creek chub, and many smaller species often referred to as "minnows". Non-native species such as brown trout and small- and largemouth bass are popular sportfish in the watershed.

IFW stocks brook trout and brown trout in the Pemaquid watershed. With only some sections of the river and colder ponds providing good habitat for these trout species, the stocking program is used to sustain high levels of recreational fishing opportunities for anglers.

Among trout species, brown trout are more tolerant to warm water, and they often survive multiple years in the Pemaquid watershed, growing to large sizes that attract anglers. Seiders reported that IFW observes natural reproduction occurring for both trout species, but has little evidence that juveniles from natural reproduction survive to adulthood.

Maine IFW studies show that wild eastern brook trout can travel over 20 miles in a month as they seek and use seasonal habitats necessary for survival during different times of the year. They also exhibit some amount of site fidelity, returning to the same areas in successive years. Seiders reported that brook trout and brown trout in the Pemaquid Watershed also move to different areas of the river and ponds from their stocking location, with some brook trout adopting "sea-run" habits by moving downstream into the estuary and then returning to fresh water.

Like brown trout, largemouth and smallmouth bass are introduced species, and because they survive well in warm, still water, they are very successfully self-sustaining throughout the watershed. Large- and smallmouth bass are omnivorous, and use juvenile and adult alewives as prey. When asked whether any of these fishes would be adversely impacted by a substantial increase in the number of alewives in the waterway, Seiders commented that he was confident that their population would not be affected by more alewives. Seiders reported that watersheds with strong, restored alewife runs experienced increases in the size of their bass, providing the examples of Webber Pond in Vassalboro and lakes and ponds on the St. George River.

During the next meeting of the Bristol Mills Dam Advisory Committee on April 11th, Dr. Karen Wilson from the University of Southern Maine will focus on sea-run migratory fish species in the Pemaquid River. The Committee meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month from 6-8pm

at the Bristol Town Office. All meetings are open to the public and all Committee materials, including supplementary reports and background information, are available at the Town Office. We hope to share this process with as many town residents and interested people as possible. Please join us to learn more about this valuable resource.

The Dam Committee welcomes Public Comments.