

Merrymeeting News

Spring 2024 Vol. XXXIV No. 2



The Newsletter of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • PO Box 233 • Richmond Maine 04357 • 207-666-1118 • www.fomb.org

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Our mission is to preserve, protect, and improve the unique ecosystems of the Bay through:

Education

Conservation & Stewardship

Research & Advocacy

Member Events

Support comes from members' tax-deductible donations and gifts.

Merrymeeting News is published seasonally and is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay. Article hyperlinks and color images are available in our [online edition](http://www.fomb.org) at www.fomb.org

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It's Spring!

It's spring and FOMB is busy! Not only with Bay Day and in-school theatre, but out in the field our volunteers continue monitoring eagle populations, PFAS levels, and shad attempting in vain to pass the Brunswick dam. Details inside.



A proud angler preserves his big fish.



Moving ice from the canal to the conveyor



Alex Poliakoff counts eagles in our aerial survey.



Chris Gutscher samples for PFAS leaking from BNAS into the Androscoggin.



John Lichter recording upstream fish migrants on sonar



Shad counting site below the Frank Wood Bridge

Our Town

During the school week of May 20, thirty 4th graders from Richmond’s Marcia Buker elementary school travelled back to the 1800s as they co-wrote and acted in a theatre/film production brought to them by FOMB in another collaboration with the [Piti Theatre Company](#).



Jay with TJ and Jane Southard



Drifting back to the past



Young future filmmakers?

After brainstorming on different aspects of Richmond life in the 19th century, the students elected to focus on ship building, dairy farming, ice harvesting, and spinning mills. Each of the two classes took two of the subjects to develop, in large part from actual historical accounts. They then scripted various scenarios which became the basis for their acting efforts.

This week-long theatre residency was filmed. It follows an “Our Town” theme the troupe developed to highlight special aspects of each community they work in. In 2022 Piti and FOMB collaborated with the Bowdoin Central School in a similar effort, the product of which [premiered](#) at our May 11, 2023 Winter Speaker Series. We also brought Piti’s production “[To Bee or Not to Bee](#)” to Bowdoin Central and Bowdoinham Community Schools in the fall of 2021. This award-winning performance calls attention to the global threats critical pollinators face.

Post-production of “Our Town” involves substantial editing, scoring, and sound and graphic work. Expect the final product sometime in late fall or early winter.



Left: A cowbell from the time capsule trunk recalls dairy farming

Right: The fence is broken and cows about to escape



Left: About to launch

Right: Waiting for the train



Photos: Ed Friedman

Our Town, continued from page 2



Leading a horse team scoring ice for block sawing



Moving blocks inside the ice house



Conveyor load of ice into the ice house



A good harvest



I don't want to share a room with my little brother while we board the ice workers



Above: The bobbins spin round and round
Left: A loom in the mill

All photos: Ed Friedman

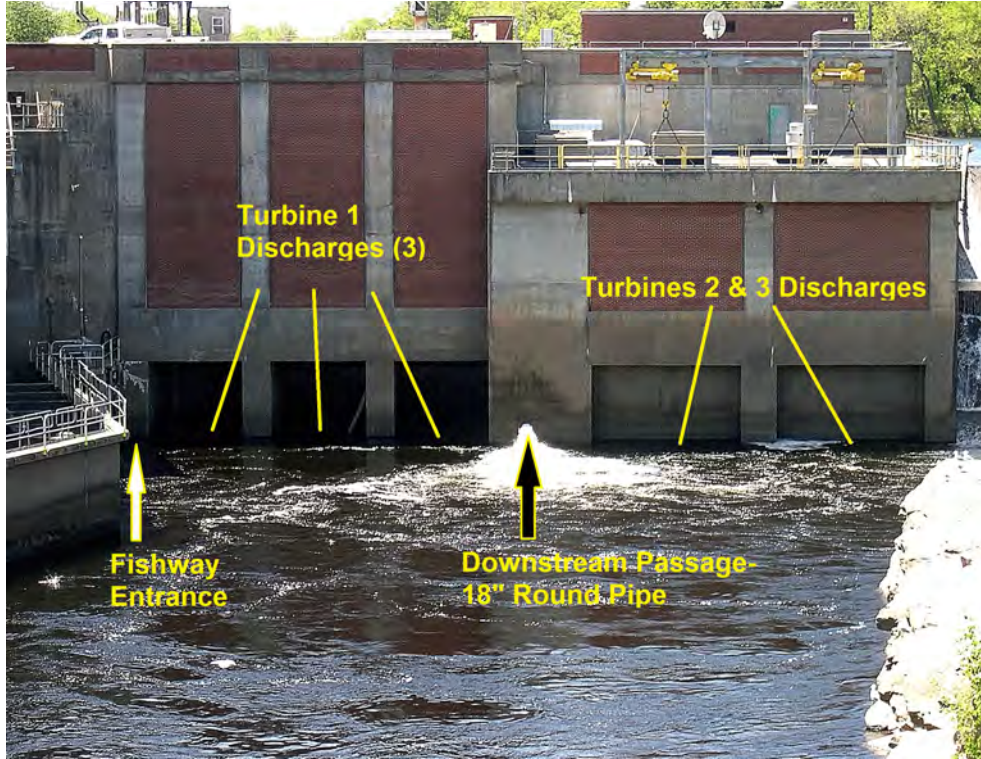
This work is partially funded by the New England Foundation for the Arts, but we are still \$10,000 shy of our needed \$15,000 goal. If you particularly appreciate this sort of effort, for a minimum tax deductible donation of \$1,000 we will list you in the film credits as an associate producer and for a minimum \$5,000 donation as an executive producer.

Many thanks to Jon Mirin, Laura Josephs, and Godeliève Richard of Piti Theatre; Mary Paine, Taylor Burke, John Libby, support staff, and the 4th graders of Marcia Buker School; Jay Robbins, Paul Berry, and Terri Blen Parker of the Richmond Historical Society; Richmond Public Works; the Ames Mill, K&G Hardware, and Main St. Dairy Treat.

Ed Friedman

Brunswick Dam Relicensing

The Brunswick-Topsham dam across the Androscoggin River is licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC or Commission) and this 50-year license expires in 2029. The approximately 5-year relicensing process has begun with FERC currently reviewing a Pre-Application Document (PAD), filed on February 21, 2024, by Brookfield White Pine Hydro LLC (Brookfield) for relicensing the Brunswick Hydroelectric Project No. 2284 (Brunswick Project or project).



Brunswick dam turbines downstream
Photo: Ed Friedman

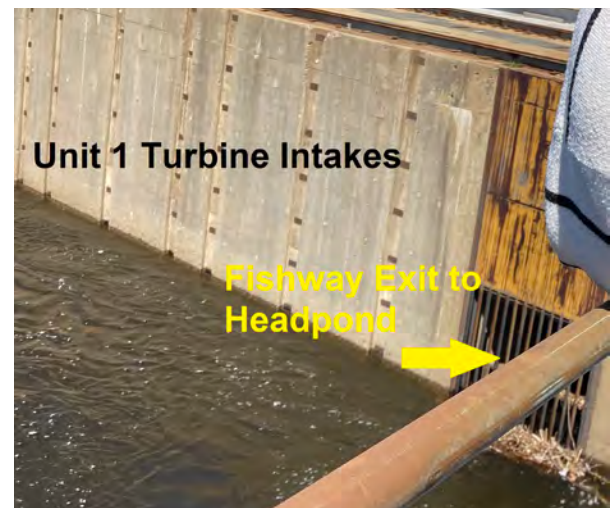
Several FOMB members attended one or both. We submitted oral and written comments at the meeting and will file more complete comments with FERC.

This dam and the project area (a few hundred yards below the dam and upstream to just below Pejepscot dam) fall entirely within the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) focus area of our research, advocacy, education, and land protection work. Our water quality monitoring in the lower Androscoggin completed under EPA or MDEP quality assurance programs has bracketed the project area since 1999 and has specifically included multiple sites within the project area since 2010. Our sampling has been done under either EPA or DEP quality assurance programs. FOMB's work led to an upgrade in water classification from Class C to Class B for the project area, locking in improved water quality, in particular higher minimum levels of dissolved oxygen.

This article does not detail the entirety of our concerns, which, among other issues, also include fish passage alternatives (dam removal, fish lift, nature-like fish passage), the inadequacy of current downstream fish passage, and the obsolete and harmful nature of excessively long FERC licenses in general.

Pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, FERC staff will prepare either an environmental assessment (EA) or a more detailed environmental impact statement (EIS) (collectively referred to as the "NEPA document"), which will be used by the Commission to determine whether, and under what conditions, to issue a new license for the project.

To support and assist FERC's environmental review, the Commission is beginning the public scoping process with goals to identify and analyze all pertinent issues, and assure that the NEPA document is thorough and balanced. The Commission's scoping process will satisfy the NEPA scoping requirements, irrespective of whether the Commission issues an EA or an EIS. FERC held a scoping meeting on May 7 in Brunswick, followed by a tour of the dam facility.



Fishway exit into head pond on upstream dam face
Photo: Phil Brzozowski

Continued on next page

Brunswick Dam Relicensing, continued from page 4

Pursuant to Section 303(d) of the federal Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. § 1313(d) and as noted in the 2012 Maine DEP Integrated Water Quality and Assessment Report, the lower Androscoggin River mainstem segment between the Pejepscot dam and the Brunswick dam, is listed in Category 4C (Impaired by non-pollutant), in non-attainment of the designated uses required by both its previous Class C and current Class B water quality standards. Information provided to the DEP from the Department of Marine Resources indicates the segment fails to support an indigenous species of fish, the American shad, as required by statute. The dam at Brunswick and the fish passage device repeatedly fail to allow passage of a sufficient number of shad to establish a sustainable population in the river above the dam. This facility is a FERC-licensed facility with a requirement for fish passage as part of a state-adopted restoration plan for this species.

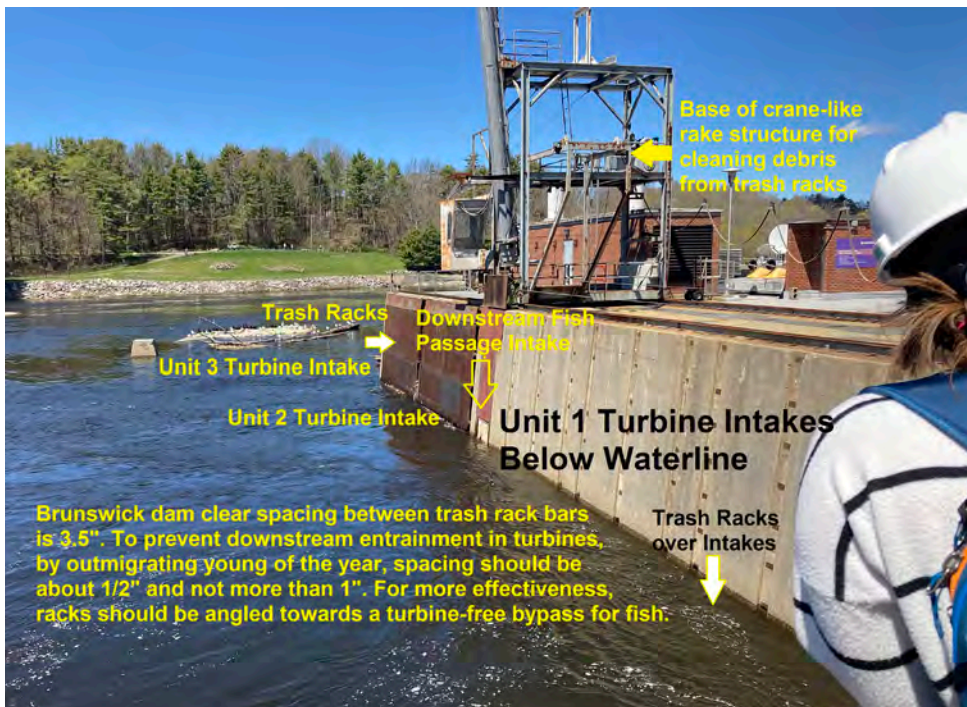


American shad
Photo: Ed Friedman

Under state law, fishing and fish habitat are designated uses for Class B waters [38 M.R.S.A § 465(3)(B)]. To support those uses, the Class B standards specifically provide that “waters must be of sufficient quality to support all aquatic species indigenous to those waters without detrimental changes to the resident biological community.” The habitat

must be characterized as unimpaired [Id. § 465(3)(A)].

Violation of narrative water-quality criteria or the absence of a designated use constitutes non-attainment of Maine’s water quality standards. See *Bangor Hydro-Electric v. Bd. of Env. Prot.*, 595 A. 2d 438, 442 (Me 1991). Annual reports of the Maine Department of Marine Resources’ (DMR) Androscoggin River Anadromous Fish Restoration Program provide a definitive and conclusive record of more than 25 years showing that, due to the Brunswick dam barrier, the Androscoggin River basin upstream no longer has an indigenous (or even artificially sustained) population of American shad and that, by their absence, the resident biological community has been detrimentally affected.



Dam face upstream
Photo: Phil Brzozowski

FOMB and Bowdoin College have both conducted multi-year underwater counts of shad in multiple areas but mostly at a site immediately below the Frank Wood bridge. To illustrate the egregiousness of Brunswick’s longstanding fish passage problem, on just one incoming tide in 2023 we counted over 7,000 shad passing upstream toward the fishway. Yet, for the entire season, the fishway passed only 13 shad. FOMB has requested that FERC conduct a full EIS in relicensing and will remain an active participant in the process.

Ed Friedman and Steve Hinchman

Spring Bay Day Blooms Again

On the morning of May 14, sandwiched between several days of rain, a few early morning drops gave way to sunshine as the good folks at Chop Pt. School welcomed us back for the first spring Bay Day since Covid began. Over one hundred 4th graders from Fisher Mitchell, Phippsburg, Woolwich, and Chop Pt. schools enjoyed a great day in a fabulous location as they studied macroinvertebrates, ran around as predators and prey, built nests, got dirty, and learned about what makes Merrymeeting Bay special.

Each student attended three of these workshops: Watershed Modeling, Wildlife, Marine Mammal Rescue, Beach Seining, Trees, Anadromous Fish Printing, Macroinvertebrates, Fish Migration, Nests, Where are We?, and Where's the Poop Go?



Great lunch view



Cool macroinvertebrates



Watershed modeling
Photo: Adele Morgan



Using a fishway takes a lot of energy.



Beach seining practice
Photo: Becky Bowes



Herring predators: seal and big fish



Wildlife
Photos: Ed Friedman except where noted.



Where does our poop go?



Where are we?

Continued on next page

Spring Bay Day Blooms Again, continued from page 6

Many thanks to:

Guides: Eric Ham, Kent Cooper, Bert Singer, Steve Pelletier, Jason Bartlett, Shannon Nelligan, Nate Gray Nathan Abbott, Lucy Poole, Elizabeth Walker, Leslie Anderson, Will Blocher, Betsy Steen, Bryan Chonko, Ernie Bergeron, Riley Palazzo and Madison Leibowitz

Chaperones: Adele Morgan, Steve Musica, Becky Bowes, Carole Sargent, Mike Curran, Bill Good, Tina Phillips, Dan Smith, Phil Brzozowski, Elise Straus-Bowers, Jane Frost, and Brian Bowers

Bus wrangler and back-up chaperone: Jim Rea

Chief cook and bottle washer: Susan Chase

Special thanks to: Chop Pt. School for their hospitality and Wild Oats Bakery & Café for our lunch wraps!!



Beach seining haul
Photo: Becky Bowes

WE NEED YOU! PLEASE SUPPORT OUR IMPORTANT WORK

FOMB Leadership

Our accomplishments are due to the hard work of dedicated volunteers, especially those who serve on our committees. If you want to get involved and serve, please contact the committee chair or Ed Friedman. We always welcome member input and we'd love for you to join us!

Steering Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair (Bowdoinham)
Vance Stephenson, Treasurer (Beavercreek, OH)
Tom Walling, Secretary (Bowdoinham)
Simon Beirne (Gardiner)
Becky Bowes (Brunswick)
Phil Brzozowski (Brunswick)
Nate Gray (Vassalboro)

Education Committee

Betsy Steen, Co-Chair, 666-3468
Tom Walling, Co-Chair, 666-5837

Conservation and Stewardship Committee

Chair Vacancy

Membership and Fundraising Committee

Nate Gray, Chair, 446-8870

Research and Advocacy Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair, 666-3372

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay · PO Box 233 · Richmond, Maine 04357

Membership Levels

- | | | |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Sturgeon | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Striped Bass | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Smelt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$750 American Eel | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Shad | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Wild Salmon | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Alewife | |

\$7 Enclosed (optional) for a copy of Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Land Owners [\$5 for book, \$2 for postage].

Name

Address

Town/State/Zip

Phone

Email

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal | <input type="checkbox"/> Send information about volunteer opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> I would like a sticker |



Thanks to Rebecca Bowes for newsletter layout.



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay
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Native fish need healthy rivers and a healthy bay



Alewives
Photo: [John Lichter](#)



Blueback herring



Leaping sturgeon
Photo: [John Lichter](#)



Sea lamprey



Striper

Photos: Ed Friedman except where noted.