

Bagaduce Fishways Panels

A series of panels presented by the Town of Penobscot and Downeast Fisheries

Pierce's Pond: part of the Bagaduce River Watershed

Pierce's Pond may seem isolated, but it sits within a larger land- and sea-scape, a watershed. The pond collects rain and snowmelt from the surrounding hills and wetlands, and the outlet stream (Mill Creek) flows into the tidal waters of the Bagaduce River, Penobscot Bay, and beyond.

In a healthy watershed that supports fish and other wildlife, as well as people, these connections are free and open, all the parts intact. The Bagaduce River Watershed is home to hundreds of species of birds, other animals, and plants, and is one of the most productive estuaries in Maine.

Take a closer look at the trees and plants, the birds and insects, the water. What do you see? What do you know now that you didn't before?

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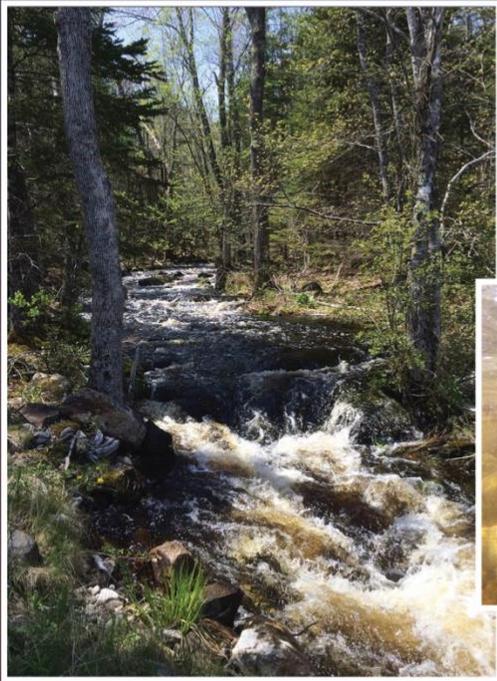
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Great blue heron- Shutterstock; widow skimmer dragonfly & frog photos by Kirk Gestalen; background image by Ann Fiewelling

A place of seasonal migrations

Fish that move between salt and fresh water are called “diadromous” and include salmon, smelt, eel, and alewives. Alewives are medium-sized schooling fish that leave the Atlantic Ocean and enter Penobscot Bay each spring. Some go into the Bagaduce and swim upstream against the current, over rocks and small waterfalls, and up into Pierce’s Pond and Wight’s Pond for spawning. Most of the adults survive and go back to the bay, and the young fish will follow a few months later. Alewives are part of a connected watershed: they bring rich ocean nutrients to inland waters and forests, provide food for wildlife (and people!), and are used by fishermen for lobster bait.

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Rapids photo by C. Schmitt; adult alewives image by Christopher Bartlett; young alewives by C. Allen/Blue Hill Heritage Trust; osprey by Leslie Clapp; background by Kathryn Tenga-Gonzalez

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Water gives life to people and towns

The name of Pierce's Pond outlet stream, Mill Creek, reveals a human past. This place is home to Wabanaki people, who for thousands of years took fish and other food and inspiration from Majabigwaduce, place of big tides and rough currents.

For European colonists, the creek provided power to several mills. Their saws cut trees into lumber, barrel staves, and shingles. Turning stones ground grain into flour.

The mills helped local families and towns grow and prosper in the 18th and 19th centuries. The mill dams, however, prevented fish from migrating and cut the connections between people, pond, stream, river, and bay. Today, communities are restoring waterways and connecting streams for fish like alewives. A new fishway opened at Mill Creek in 2017.

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Mills on nearby Wight's Pond.

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Mill Creek passes through a restored "stream smart" culvert beneath the road to Pierce's Pond.

Canoe by Frank G. Speck; mills at Wight's Pond courtesy of Penobscot Historical Society; culvert by C. Schmitt; background image by C. Schmitt

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Restoration brings a community together

Many different groups are working to restore water flows and wildlife in Pierce's Pond. Abandoned mill dams blocked fish migration and broke the pond's connection to the sea. In 2017, a new fishway provided alewives and other fish access to the pond, while maintaining water levels.

The Town of Penobscot Alewife Committee and Maine Coast Heritage Trust led an effort to restore this connection and another at Wight's Pond, with vital support from The Nature Conservancy, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the residents of the Town of Penobscot, The Trustees of Maine's Natural Resources, the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, and a number of other organizations and generous private donors.

Conservation is part of restoration. Nearly 15% of the Bagaduce River watershed is permanently protected from development, the result of years of collaboration between willing landowners and land trusts. Many protected areas are open for anyone to visit and explore.

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Pierce's Pond fishway before and after restoration.



Before and after by Kate Weiland Photography; Maps courtesy Wight Pierce; great egret by C. Allen/Blue Hill Heritage Trust; background image by Leslie Clapp

Many helping hands make a difference

The 2017 restoration projects at Pierce's Pond and nearby Wight's Pond were completed thanks to vital funding, time, and support from many individuals and organizations:

The Town of Penobscot Alewife Committee, Select Board, and citizens

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

The Nature Conservancy

Maine Coast Heritage Trust

R.F. Jordan and Sons Construction, Inc.

Wright-Pierce

The Pollinator's Fund

Generous private donors

The Natural Resources Trustees for the State of Maine

Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund

Blue Hill Heritage Trust

M.E. Astbury & Sons

Ted Yoder

Maine Sea Grant

Bill Hutchins

Ed Gracie Logging

Janice Leach McKay

As well as the understanding and patience of many neighbors and waterfront land owners.

Thank you!

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