

NEWS RELEASE

July 16, 2009

IJC urges action to restore natural fish migration on St. Croix River

In a [letter sent to Governor John Baldacci](#) of Maine on July 10, 2009, the International Joint Commission (IJC) expressed concern about state legislation that blocks the natural migration and spawning of alewife (river herring) in most of the St. Croix River. A 1995 state law closed off the fish ladders at Woodland Dam and Grand Falls Dam. The law was amended in 2008 to re-open the fishway at Woodland Dam, but this still excludes the alewife from most of the river.

The anadromous alewife plays an important ecological role in the river and coastal ecosystems of the Northeast. The scientific evidence does not support the view that alewives interfere with the recreational fishery for introduced smallmouth bass. The IJC urged the Governor and his administration to engage with local stakeholders and legislators to restore the ecological integrity of the St. Croix River, which marks the border between Canada and the United States.

The IJC is an independent, binational organization established under the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to assist the two governments in the prevention and resolution of disputes related to water resources and the environment along the shared border. In the St. Croix basin, it is advised by the International St. Croix River Watershed Board. The Board has identified the restoration of the ecosystem integrity of the river by the elimination of barriers to alewife passage as one of its top priorities. It has been active in supporting scientific studies of alewife ecology and disseminating the results. The Board also offers a forum for public discussion of this and other issues in the basin. The alewife question was on the agenda of the Board's last public meeting, held in McAdam, New Brunswick on June 17, 2009, attracting record attendance from American and Canadian citizens representing a broad range of sectors and interests who spoke overwhelmingly in favor of re-opening all fishways on the river. Further information on the Board and its activities is available at http://ijc.org/en/_iscrwb.

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