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DAM REMOVAL OPENS BROOK HABITAT TO MIGRATORY FISH

WELLS, Maine, September 21, 2015 — On September 18, a small dam was removed from Goff Mill Brook in Arundel near where it flows into the Kennebunk River estuary. The removal reconnects seven miles of stream habitat to the estuary, benefiting brook trout, other migratory and freshwater fish, and the watershed's ecology. The project was coordinated by the Wells National Estuarine Research Reserve, working in full partnership with the Sebago Chapter of Trout Unlimited under TU's national Embrace-a-Stream grant program.

"Goff Mill Brook is now connected to the Gulf of Maine for the first time in at least 60 years," said Wells Reserve project manager Jake Aman. "We expect many fish and wildlife species to benefit from this restoration, including commercially important fish like American eel and river herring."

The small dam had been built to create a swimming hole in an era before the negative environmental consequences of such structures were appreciated. Over the years, the pool had fallen into disuse and the dam into disrepair. While current environmental regulations would not allow a similar structure to be built, Maine has no program to identify and fund the removal of its many legacy dams.

Sebago TU President David Miller said, "This is Sebago Chapter's third dam removal in the last three years. Effective partnerships have been the key to these successful habitat restoration projects that work to improve both fisheries and the greater environment."

The project had the support the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Maine Department of Marine Resources, and the conservation community. Additional funding and support were provided by The Nature Conservancy, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund. Caribou Springs LLC of Gilead, Maine was the prime contractor.

Gulf of Maine Coastal Program Project Leader Jed Wright congratulated the Wells Reserve and its partners for their work in identifying and helping remove structures that block access to habitat and disrupt natural stream processes. Wright said, "Communities throughout Maine are finding that removing barriers like this not only opens up habitat, but also demonstrates the tremendous opportunities we have to help our streams and rivers."

Next spring and summer, Wells Reserve researchers and Sebago TU volunteers will begin documenting the long-term results of the dam removal. To learn more, visit wellsreserve.org and sebagotu.org.

This project was funded in part by the Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund, through which proceeds from the sale of a dedicated instant lottery ticket (currently Moose Moolah) are used to support outdoor recreation and natural resource conservation. For more information, go to maine.gov/ifw/MOHF.html.

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