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Freshwater “411”

Maine groups release comprehensive report on Maine’s freshwater plants and animals

March 24, 2009 PORTLAND, MAINE— Where do scientists get information for managing Maine’s lakes and rivers? Before today, a lot of different places.

Now, for the first time, the science on Maine’s freshwater animals and plants has been collected into one place. At this week’s Maine Water Conference, a group of government, conservation and academic partners will release *Freshwater Biodiversity in Maine*.

Call it the 411 of H₂O.

This encyclopedic report includes every known freshwater species and habitat type in Maine, serving as a base for future freshwater management. With this resource, Mainers can not only protect fish and ferns, but sustain the economy and way of life that freshwaters make possible.

The report represents the efforts of the [University of Maine’s Mitchell Center for Environmental and Watershed Research](#), [The Nature Conservancy](#), the Maine Departments of [Environmental Protection](#) and [Inland Fisheries and Wildlife](#), U.S. Geological Survey, the Sportsman’s Alliance of Maine and others.

The report is a valuable tool for scientists, conservationists, and government agencies who seek to sustainably manage our natural resources.

“You can only protect something if you know it’s there,” says Peter Vaux, Research Associate Professor for the University of Maine’s Mitchell Center. “We now have the key information we need to protect our freshwater systems and the species that rely on them.”

“Our lakes, ponds, streams and rivers are part of what makes Maine a great place to live, and they are critical for supporting our tourism and recreation economies,” says Peter Bourque, Director of Fisheries Program Development for the Department of Inland

Fisheries and Wildlife, “Anglers spend upwards of \$250 million per year in Maine, so there is a direct correlation between healthy ponds and healthy pocketbooks. *Freshwater Biodiversity* gives us the information to best manage our natural assets.”

In addition to a complete listing of aquatic plant and animal species, the report provides information on habitat types and threats to Maine’s freshwater biodiversity.

From there, *Freshwater Biodiversity*’s general report offers recommendations for protecting this biodiversity. These include the removal of barriers such as dams and culverts, protect important habitats through land conservation, and reduce the risk of invasive species through education and regulation.

The report is available online through the [Maine Natural Areas Program website](#), where visitors can download the general report as well as the [comprehensive technical report](#). Years in the making, *Freshwater Biodiversity* has already been used by conservationists and state agencies prior to the public release.

“I became a conservationist because I love being out in Maine’s natural places, especially its lakes and rivers,” adds Barbara Vickery, Director of Conservation Programs for The Nature Conservancy in Maine, “it is a win-win-win situation when we can practice environmental stewardship that supports wildlife, supports our economy, and maintains the very quality of life that we as Mainers enjoy.”

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. The Conservancy and its more than 1 million members have protected nearly 120 million acres worldwide. [Visit The Nature Conservancy on the Web at www.nature.org/maine.](http://www.nature.org/maine)