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New Orrington fishway dam works 'perfectly'

[By](#)



BANGOR DAILY NEWS PHOTO BY GABOR DEGRE

The recently completed rock ramp fishway on Sedgeunkedunk Stream in Orrington replaces the old Meadow Dam. [Buy Photo](#)

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BDN Staff

ORRINGTON, Maine — The new rock ramp fishway dam that replaced the deteriorated Meadow Dam still maintains water levels in Sedgeunkedunk Meadow and Fields Pond but looks like natural rapids created by a pile of brook rocks.

The fishway dam will allow fish — including alewives and endangered Atlantic salmon — to travel up Sedgeunkedunk Stream after years of being blocked, and its bubbling pools are designed to create an attractive spawning and rearing habitat.

“Eight boulder weirs are what actually create the fishway,” Richard Whitmore, superintendent for Gary Pomeroy Logging Inc. of Hermon, which constructed the dam, said Friday. “They create the pools for the fish. They’re a series of boulders locked together, with one rock placed on top of another.”

The large boulders are 3 or 4 feet in diameter, placed about 20 feet apart.

“Ninety percent are hidden because of the streambed fill that was placed back around them,” Whitmore said. “They create eight individual pools, the first one where the old dam used to be.”

The town acquired the failing Meadow Dam, also known as the Fields Pond Dam, through tax liens when former operators Eastern Fine Paper Co. closed in 2004.

After initial cost estimates of \$189,000 to repair the failing dam, town leaders began working with state and federal organizations and agencies on alternatives for fixing or replacing the dam, which is behind Bob’s Kozy Korner store on Cozy Corner.

After numerous studies and asking residents for approval to move forward, town leaders decided on a rock ramp fishway, which would cost around the same amount as fixing the old dam, while maintaining water levels, increasing fish use of the waterway, and protecting wildlife habitat and property values.

“The fishway has been completed,” Town Manager Carl Young said in an e-mail Friday. “Pomeroy Logging’s subcontractor finished the replanting yesterday and the area has been reopened to the public.”

Pomeroy was paid \$169,300 to construct the fishway.

The town paid for the fishway, but had a number of partners who helped with financial and other support. Included on that list are: Aquatic Science Associates Inc. in Brewer; Kleinschmidt Associates of Pittsfield; Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife officials; National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a nonprofit U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service corporation; Maine Atlantic Salmon Conservation; the University of Maine; National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration; the Maine Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership; the Penobscot Salmon Club; Cianbro Corp. of Pittsfield for wetland mitigation; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; and local residents.

“This is a little piece of resorting diadromous habitats,” Jed Wright, senior biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Gulf of Maine Coastal Program, said Friday.

Diadromous fish are migratory fish that use both fresh and salt water, including eels, alewives and salmon.

“We’re interested in restoring the endangered fish populations throughout the Gulf of Maine,” he said. “A critical part of that is connectivity ... by reducing barriers.”

Recent weather has provided a real-life test of the rock ramp fishway, Young said, and future tests are planned to ensure the dam is working.

“Recent rain has tested the new dam in town, which was completed this week, and it worked perfectly,” Young said. “Steve Shepard [of Aquatic Science Associates] is finishing the continuing inspection and maintenance plan.”

“It’s pretty tough to tell the old dam was there,” Whitmore said. “It looks pretty natural, I think.”

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