

CHAPTER 200**MAINE'S RIVERS****§401. Maine's rivers**

The Legislature finds: [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

1. Rivers and streams a natural resource. That the State's nearly 32,000 miles of rivers and streams comprise one of its most important natural resources, historically vital to the state's commerce and industry and to the quality of life enjoyed by Maine people;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

2. Increase in value of rivers and streams. That the value of its rivers and streams has increased in recent years due to the improvement in the quality of their waters, the restoration of their fisheries, the growth in demand for hydropower and the expanding interest in river recreation activities, leading at times to conflict among these uses;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

3. Use of rivers and streams. That its rivers and streams afford the state's people with major opportunities for the enjoyment of nature's beauty, unique recreational activities and solace from an industrialized society, as well as for economic expansion through the development of hydropower, the revitalization of waterfronts and ports and the attraction of both tourists and desirable new industries; and
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

4. Policy. That the best interests of the state's people are served by a policy which recognizes the importance that their rivers and streams have for meeting portions of several public needs, provides guidance for striking a balance among the various uses which affords the public maximum benefit and seeks harmony rather than conflict among these uses.
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).

§402. Declaration of policy

In its role as trustee of the public waters, the Legislature declares that the well-being of the citizens of this State depends on striking a carefully considered and well-reasoned balance among the competing uses of the state's rivers and streams. Further, the Legislature declares that such a balance shall: [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

1. Restoration of water. Restore waters to a condition clean enough to allow fishing and swimming in all our rivers and streams;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

2. Revitalization of waterfronts. Revitalize waterfronts and ports;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

3. Maintenance of scenic beauty. Maintain, even in areas where development occurs, the scenic beauty and character of our rivers;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

4. Interests of riparian owners. Recognize and respect the rightful interests of riparian owners;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

5. Increase hydroelectric power. Increase the hydroelectric power available to replace foreign oil in the State;

[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

6. Hydropower development. Streamline procedures to facilitate hydropower development under reasoned environmental, technical and public safety constraints;

[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

7. Fisheries. Restore anadromous fisheries and improve the productivity of inland fisheries;

[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

8. Recreation. Expand the opportunities for outdoor recreation; and

[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

9. Outstanding river stretches. Protect the special resource values of the flowing waters and shorelands of the State's most outstanding river stretches, as identified by the former Department of Conservation's 1982 Maine Rivers Study and as specifically delineated in this chapter.

[PL 2013, c. 405, Pt. D, §6 (AMD).]

Further, the Legislature finds that with careful planning our foreseeable needs for all of these uses may be reasonably integrated harmoniously with one another on the state's 32,000 miles of rivers and streams. [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW). PL 2013, c. 405, Pt. D, §6 (AMD).

§403. Special protection for outstanding rivers

The Legislature declares that certain rivers, because of their unparalleled natural and recreational values, provide irreplaceable social and economic benefits to the people in their existing state. It is the Legislature's intent that no new dams be constructed on these river and stream segments without the specific authorization of the Legislature, that no new water diversion, which would constitute a hydropower project pursuant to Title 38, section 632, and which would bypass all or part of the natural course of these river and stream segments, be constructed without the specific authorization of the Legislature and that additional development or redevelopment of dams existing on these segments, as of September 23, 1983, shall be designed and executed in a manner that either enhances or does not diminish the significant resource values of these river segments identified by the 1982 Maine Rivers Study. No license or permit under Title 38, sections 630 to 636 may be issued for construction of new dams on the river and stream segments subject to this special protection without the specific authorization of the Legislature, for the construction of any water diversion project which would constitute a hydropower project pursuant to Title 38, section 632, and which would bypass all or part of the natural course of river and stream segments subject to this special protection without the specific authorization of the Legislature or for additional development or redevelopment of existing dams on the river and stream segments subject to this special protection where the additional development or redevelopment diminishes the significant resource values of these river and stream segments. [PL 1987, c. 717, §1 (AMD).]

Further, the Legislature finds that projects inconsistent with this policy on new dams and diversion projects, which constitute hydropower projects pursuant to Title 38, section 632, and redevelopment of existing dams will alter the physical and chemical characteristics and designated uses of the waters of these river and stream segments. It finds that these impacts are unacceptable and constitute violations of the State's water quality standards. The Legislature directs that no project which fails to meet the requirements of this section may be certified under the United States Clean Water Act, Section 401. [PL 1987, c. 717, §1 (AMD).]

For purposes of this section, outstanding river and stream segments meriting special protection shall include: [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

1. Allagash River. The Allagash River from Gerald Brook in Allagash up to but not including the Churchill Dam in T.10, R.12, W.E.L.S., including its tributaries the Musquacook Stream from the Allagash River to the outlet of Third Musquacook Lake in T. 11, R. 11, W.E.L.S.; Allagash Stream from its inlet to Chamberlain Lake to the outlet of Allagash Pond in T.9, R.15, W.E.L.S.; and Chemquasabamticook Stream from its inlet into Long Lake to the outlet of Chemquasabamticook Lake, excluding Round Pond in T.13, R.12, W.E.L.S., Harvey Pond, Long Lake, Umsaskis Lake, Musquacook Lakes (1-2), Little Round Pond in T.8, R.13, W.E.L.S., Allagash Lake and Clayton Lake; [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

2. Aroostook River. The Aroostook River from and including the Sheridan Dam in Ashland to Millinocket Stream, including its tributaries Millinocket Stream from the Aroostook River to the outlet of Millinocket Lake; Munsungan Stream from the Aroostook River to the outlet of Little Munsungan Lake; St. Croix Stream from the Aroostook River to Hall Brook in T.9, R.5, W.E.L.S.; and the Big Machias River from the Aroostook River to the outlet of Big Machias Lake, excluding Round Pond in T.7, R.9, W.E.L.S.; [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

3. Dead River. The Dead River from the Kennebec River to the upstream limit of Big Eddy; [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

4. Dennys River. The Dennys River from Hinckley Point in Dennysville to the outlet of Meddybemps Lake; [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

5. East Machias River. The East Machias River, including the Maine River, from the Route 191 Mill Memorial Bridge in East Machias to the outlet of Pocomoonshine Lake, excluding Hadley Lake, Second Lake, Round Lake, Crawford Lake, Lower Mud Lake and Upper Mud Lake; [PL 1983, c. 530, §5 (AMD).]

6. Fish River. The Fish River from its inlet into St. Froid Lake in T.14, R. 7, W.E.L.S. to the outlet of Mud Pond in T.13, R. 8, W.E.L.S., excluding Portage Lake, Round Pond and Fish River Lake. [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

7. Kennebec River. The Kennebec River from Bay Point in Georgetown to its confluence with the Sebasticook River in Winslow and from the confluence of the Dead River with the Kennebec River up to, but not including, the Harris Dam in Indian Stream Township; [PL 2007, c. 364, §1 (AMD).]

8. Machias River. The Machias River, including Fourth and Fifth Lake Streams, from Fort O'Brien in Machias to the outlet of Fifth Machias Lake, including its tributaries the West Branch Machias River from the Machias River to the outlet of Lower Sabao Lake; Old Stream from the Machias River to the outlet of First Lake; and Mopang Stream from the Machias River to the outlet of Mopang Second Lake, excluding Machias Lakes (1-4), Lower Pond and Mopang First Lake; [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

9. Mattawamkeag River. The Mattawamkeag River from the Penobscot River to the Mattawamkeag and Kingman Township townline. [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

10. Moose River. The Moose River from its inlet into Attean Pond to its confluence with Number One Brook in Beattie Township; [PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

11. Narraguagus River. The Narraguagus River from the Route 1 bridge in Cherryfield to the outlet of Eagle Lake, excluding Beddington Lake and Deer Lake;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

12. Penobscot River. The Penobscot River, including the Eastern Channel, from Sandy Point in Stockton Springs up to, but not including, the Veazie Dam, including its tributaries the West Branch of the Penobscot from its inlet into Ambajejus Lake to the western Boundary of T.3, R.10, and from its inlet into Chesuncook Lake up to, but not including, the dam at Seboomook Lake; the East Branch Penobscot River from the Penobscot River up to, but not including, the dam at the outlet of Grand Lake Matagamon; the Wassataquoik Stream from the East Branch of the Penobscot River to Annis Brook in T.4, R.9, W.E.L.S.; the Webster Brook from its inlet into Grand Lake Matagamon up to, but not including, Telos Dam in T.6, R.11, W.E.L.S.; the Seboeis River from the East Branch of the Penobscot River to the outlet of Snowshoe Lake; and the Sawtelle Brook from the Seboeis River up to, but not including, the dam at the outlet of Sawtelle Deadwater, excluding Passamagamet Lake, Webster Lake, White Horse Lake and Snowshoe Lake;
[PL 1983, c. 530, §6 (AMD).]

13. Pleasant River. The Pleasant River from Seavey Point in Addison to the outlet of Pleasant River Lake;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

14. Rapid River. The Rapid River from the Magalloway Plantation and Upton townline to the outlet of Pond in the River;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

15. Saco River. The Saco River from the Little Ossipee River to the New Hampshire border;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

16. St. John River. The St. John River from one mile above the foot of Big Rapids in Allagash to the Baker Branch, including its tributaries the Big Black River from the St. John River to the Canadian border; the Northwest Branch from the St. John River to the outlet of Beaver Pond in T.12, R.17, W.E.L.S.; the Southwest Branch from the Baker Branch to 5 miles downstream of the Canadian border; and the Baker Branch from the St. John River to 1.5 miles below Baker Lake;
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

17. Sheepscot River. The Sheepscot River from the Route 1 bridge in Wiscasset to Halldale Road in Montville, excluding Long Pond and Sheepscot Pond, including its tributaries the West Branch of the Sheepscot from its confluence with the Sheepscot River in Whitefield to the outlet of Branch Pond in China; and
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

18. West Branch Pleasant River. The West Branch Pleasant River from the East Branch to the outlet of Fourth West Branch Pond in Shawtown Township, excluding Silver Lake and West Branch Ponds (1-3).
[PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW). PL 1983, c. 530, §§5-7 (AMD). PL 1987, c. 717, §1 (AMD). PL 2007, c. 364, §1 (AMD).

§403-A. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms have the following meanings. [PL 1987, c. 717, §2 (NEW).]

1. Existing dam. "Existing dam" means any human-made barrier across a river segment identified in this chapter that impounds water and has not deteriorated or been breached or modified to the point where it no longer impounds water at 50% or more of its design level at normal flows.

[RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §2 (COR).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1987, c. 717, §2 (NEW). RR 2021, c. 2, Pt. B, §2 (COR).

§404. Finance Authority of Maine

The Finance Authority of Maine may not finance any energy generating system project under Title 10, chapter 110, if that project is located in whole or in part on any river listed in section 403. [PL 1987, c. 393, §16 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW). PL 1987, c. 393, §16 (AMD).

§405. St. Croix River

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW). MRSA T. 12 §405, sub-§4 (RP).

§405-A. St. Croix River

1. Special consideration. In consideration of the special status of the St. Croix River as an international boundary governed in part by the International Joint Commission and the Province of New Brunswick, the Legislature establishes the following provisions.

[PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

2. Commercial, industrial or residential development. Except as provided in this subsection, no person may undertake any further commercial, industrial or residential development in the area within 250 feet of the St. Croix River from the Grand Falls flowage to the north end of Wingdam Island. The following activities shall be exempt from these provisions:

A. Development of hydroelectric or other dams, plants and related facilities or improvements subject to the conditions described in subsection 3; [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

B. A bridge at Vanceboro; [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

C. A haul road from Grand Falls; [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

D. Activities and developments related to timber harvesting, mining or extraction of sand and gravel; and [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

E. Any recreational management activity conducted or approved by the State. [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

[PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

3. New hydroelectric dams. No person may develop new hydroelectric dams on the St. Croix River from Grand Falls to the north end of Wingdam Island without first:

A. Having performed a feasibility study, by a qualified consultant, approved by the Governor to examine the alternative potentials for hydropower development downstream from Grand Falls and having made the findings available to the State for review; [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

B. Having consulted with the office of the Governor or other agency of the State, designated by the Governor, regarding the feasibility of this downstream development; [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

C. Having determined that there exists no economically feasible site downstream from Grand Falls; and [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

D. Having consulted with the St. Croix International Waterway Commission. [PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

If the State disagrees with any of the assumptions, findings or conclusions of the economic feasibility study, the comments of the State shall be considered and responded to by the consultant. These comments and the responses of the consultant shall be noted in the final report of the economic feasibility study.

[PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW).]

4. Review. The Governor's Energy Office shall review the status of hydropower development on the St. Croix River and shall report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over energy and natural resources by January 1, 2013 and every 5 years thereafter. The report must include any recommendations for changes in the provisions of this section together with the justification for the changes. If the St. Croix River is included in any legislative Act or regulation that directly or indirectly has as its effect the essential prohibition of construction of new dams or development or redevelopment of existing dams on the St. Croix River, this section is repealed on the effective date of that Act or regulation.

[PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. MM, §11 (AMD); PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. MM, §26 (AFF).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1987, c. 635 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. MM, §11 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. MM, §26 (AFF).

§406. Report

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1983, c. 458, §1 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. EE, §16 (RP). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. EE, §30 (AFF).

§407. Comprehensive river resource management plans

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, with assistance from the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, the Department of Marine Resources, the Department of Environmental Protection, the Governor's Energy Office and other state agencies as needed, shall develop, subject to the Maine Administrative Procedure Act, Title 5, chapter 375, a comprehensive river resource management plan for each watershed with a hydropower project licensed under the Federal Power Act or to be licensed under the Federal Power Act. These plans must provide a basis for state agency comments, recommendations and permitting decisions and at a minimum include, as applicable, minimum flows, impoundment level regimes, upstream and downstream fish passage, maintenance of aquatic habitat and habitat productivity, public access and recreational opportunities. These plans must update, complement and, after public notice, comment and hearings in the watershed, be adopted as components of the State's comprehensive rivers management plan. A comprehensive river resource management plan adopted under this section is a major substantive rule as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A. [PL 2021, c. 675, §1 (AMD).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 1989, c. 453, §1 (NEW). PL 1989, c. 878, §A29 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. EE, §17 (AMD). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. EE, §30 (AFF). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV). PL 2021, c. 675, §1 (AMD).

§408. Floodplain management

(REPEALED)

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. HH, §1 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. HH, §7 (AFF). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV). PL 2025, c. 33, Pt. C, §4 (AMD). PL 2025, c. 33, Pt. C, §10 (AFF). PL 2025, c. 388, Pt. D, §22 (RP).

§409. State Floodplain Mapping Fund**(REPEALED)**

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. HH, §2 (NEW). PL 2011, c. 655, Pt. HH, §7 (AFF). PL 2011, c. 657, Pt. W, §5 (REV). PL 2025, c. 33, Pt. C, §5 (AMD). PL 2025, c. 33, Pt. C, §10 (AFF). PL 2025, c. 388, Pt. D, §23 (RP).

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