



***FREE THE ANDRO FILES WITH FEDERAL REGULATORS
SEEKING BOLD THINKING, HONEST ANALYSIS TO RETURN
MILLIONS OF FISH TO ANDROSCOGGIN RIVER***

**Group Works for Once-In-A-Lifetime Chance to Reconnect the
Androscoggin to the Sea for Fish, Wildlife, Healthy Waters for All**

‘The fish of the Androscoggin have waited 47 years’

BRUNSWICK, ME – May 2026 –[Free The Andro](#), the Maine non-profit, community-based group driving the effort to create free swimming fish passage between the Androscoggin River and the ocean after more than a century of neglect and blockage at the Brunswick–Topsham dam, has filed with federal regulators to support research that helps determine the best options for achieving state-targeted sea-run fish populations in Maine’s second longest river.

In a 9-page letter to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission -- the Washington DC-based agency conducting the proposed relicensing of the dam -- *FTA* said: “*FTA* remains committed to working constructively with the Licensee, FERC, resource agencies, and other stakeholders to achieve a new license for the Brunswick Project that genuinely serves the public interest and the ecological and cultural legacy of the Androscoggin River. This will require bold thinking and honest analysis – not a predetermined outcome, and not a process where empirical studies are deferred until after the key decisions have already been made. The diadromous fish of the Androscoggin have been waiting 47 years for this relicensing. The record must reflect all options, all data, and all voices.”

The letter comes in the early stages of the relicensing effort by dam owner Brookfield White Pine Hydro, part of Canadian-based, global energy giant Brookfield Renewable, with shares listed on the New York Stock Exchange. The federal license to operate the dam expires in 2029.

In the letter, *FTA* petitions FERC to require Brookfield-funded research and analysis to include all alternatives for opening upstream and downstream fish passage. These alternatives can be used either as stand-alone solutions for fish passage, or in combination to enable fish passage, or as part of analysis to determine effectiveness of any proposed solutions. Brookfield has previously stated that it does not plan to conduct all such research and analysis.

Blocked at Brunswick-Topsham

Migratory fish runs on the Androscoggin are essentially gone.

The Androscoggin at Brunswick Falls – located immediately upriver from the Route 201 bridge linking Brunswick and Topsham -- has been fully or partially blocked by dams since the early 1700s. The current dam was opened in 1982 and includes a fish passage ladder hoped to enable substantial upriver fish movement. All parties agree that the current fish ladder does not work. Sonar readings and other observations below the dam show as many as 10,000 shad below the dam on a given tide, but only 14 passed the fishway in all of 2023 and only 91 in 2024. Similarly, as many as 180,000 river herring pass the dam each year, but habitat analysis and historical records show that this number could easily be in the millions.

The *FTA* letter to FERC supports the specific, science-based fish passage targets that the Maine Department of Marine Resources asked FERC to use in its dam relicensing decision-making. The MDMR annual target populations are for 171,125 shad, 1 million blueback herring, 7.7 million alewives, and 600 Atlantic salmon above the dam.

“Today’s Androscoggin River is broken and needs to be and can be fixed to benefit Mainers, our economy, and the marine environment that we all love,” said Charles “Chip” Spies, *FTA* founder. *FTA* is comprised of citizen and professional volunteers and founding member groups American Rivers, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Maine Rivers, Merrymeeting Bay Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and RESTORE: The Northwoods.

“This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity as the dam faces federal relicensing which will determine the fate of the river, its fish, commercial and recreational fishing, and the many communities along its shores for generations to come,” Spies said.

Fish Passage Alternatives Must Not Be Narrowed Before Data is Gathered

The *FTA* letter requests FERC to compel Brookfield to examine all alternatives for fish passage and that “alternatives must not be narrowed before empirical data is available”. Among other key elements in the letter, *FTA* asks that FERC require Brookfield to thoroughly study all alternatives that can provide for upstream and downstream fish passage in order to deliver complete study results in 2027 with sufficient time for agency and stakeholder review.

“We must use the 2029 expiration of the Brunswick-Topsham dam federal license to assure that any license renewal is contingent upon providing abundant, sustainable populations of native, migratory fish access to the Androscoggin watershed,” said Spies.

About *Free the Andro*

[*Free the Andro*](#) (*FTA*) fights to create free swimming native fish passage at the Brunswick-Topsham dam. *FTA* seeks solutions supported by solid data from objective research and accepted best practices to create abundant and sustainable fish passage.

FTA is comprised of citizen and professional volunteers and founding member groups American Rivers, Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, Maine Rivers, Merrymeeting Bay Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and RESTORE: The Northwoods.

[“Allowing Fish Back into the Androscoggin River: What To Do with a 50 Year Old Dam”](#) is an *FTA* video examining the rich history, decades old challenges, and future opportunities for the Androscoggin River watershed and the gateway to that watershed at the Brunswick-Topsham dam.

Follow *FTA* on FB “#FreeTheAndro”

Further information about the dam and relicensing is available at the [Brunswick-Topsham Dam Resource Library](#) hosted by Bowdoin College as an information clearing house. It provides scientific articles, data, regulatory reports, historical perspective, videos, instructions for stakeholder commenting, and more. Anyone can subscribe for periodic updates.

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