

Restoring Diadromous Fish Habitat in the Peconic River

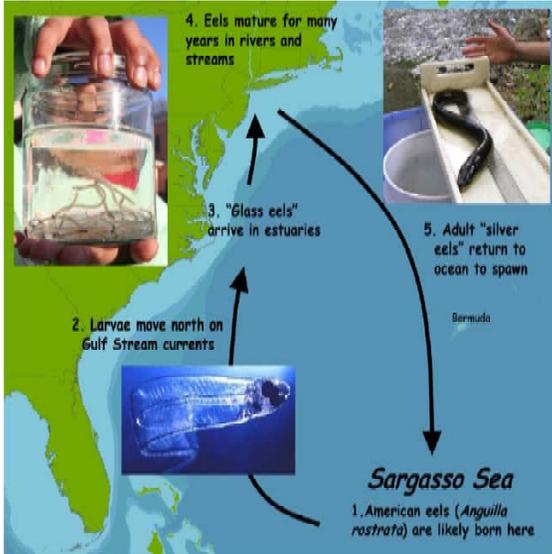


Julie Nace, NYSDEC/ PEP, 205 N Belle Meade Rd, Suite 1, East Setauket, NY 11733 jsnace@gw.dec.state.ny.us

What are diadromous fish?

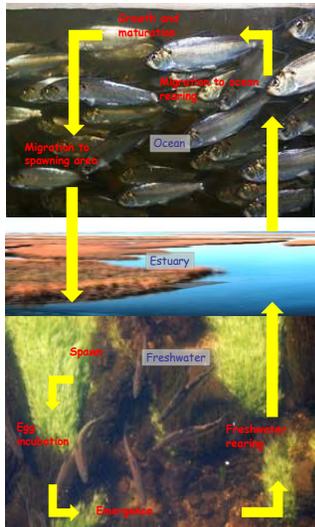
American Eel (*Anguilla rostrata*)

Catadromous: Living in the river, migrating to the ocean to spawn.



Alewife or River Herring (*Alosa pseudoharellus*)

Anadromous: Living in the ocean, migrating up the rivers to spawn.



Overview

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, dams were built on the Peconic River for grist mills, cranberry bogs, other industrial uses, and as property line demarcations. These dams cut off historic migratory routes of diadromous fish, blocking access to hundreds of acres of habitat. The diadromous fish affected are River Herring, or Alewife, and the American Eel.

For many years, there has been an effort to restore diadromous fish habitat to the Peconic River. With engineering and dedication by local citizens and governmental partners, it has been possible to start to help diadromous fish over the dams, or remove the dams completely. Removal of obsolete dams is often the most desirable option. In cases where removal is not feasible due to concerns about water level or the historical value of the dam, fishways are the next best alternative. Fishways come in all shapes and sizes such as galvanized steel steep passes, step pools, rock ramps, and bypass channels. Their function is all the same: to help migrating fish get from the bottom of the dam to the open habitat at the top of the dam.

Currently, only one dam has been made accessible to alewives and eels. There are projects in the works for some of the next dams in the river. The goal is to restore the entire historic diadromous fish habitat of the Peconic River.

Restoration Efforts

Peconic River: Grangebel Park, Riverhead 2010 Coastal America Partnership Award

Two spillways on the Grangebel Park Dam, in the Town of Riverhead, made this section of the river completely impassable for fish. A moveable fish ladder had been installed at the North Spillway each spring since 2000. Today, a permanent rock ramp has been constructed at South Spillway to allow fish passage. The rock ramp opened 1.5 miles and 24 acres of historic diadromous fish habitat. Over \$1 million has been invested in the design and construction of this project. Fish passage structures are planned for 3 upriver dams, eventually restoring a total of 7 miles and 200 acres in the Peconic River.



Old North Spillway Fish Ladder



Repaired North Spillway



Old South Spillway



South Spillway- Replaced with Rock Ramp

