

A Brief History of Edwards Dam

1834 -- Maine citizens, fearing decimation of fisheries populations, protest against the concept of a dam in Augusta when it is first proposed in legislative authorization several years before the dam is even built.

1837 -- Kennebec River Dam Co. builds dam below the head of tide in Augusta. Construction includes locks for boat passage and fish ladder. Operator changes name to Kennebec Locks & Canal Company.

1838 -- Fish ladder washed away in spring flood. Dam's owners refuse to rebuild fish passage.

1839 -- Major breach of dam.

1842-1846 -- Dam powers seven 7 saw mills, a grist mill, and a machine shop.

1846 -- Major Breach of dam.

1855 -- Major breach of dam.

1868 -- Saw mill and grist mill destroyed by fire.

1870 -- Major breach of dam. Dam rebuilt to current configuration.

1882 -- Ownership changes to Edwards Manufacturing Company. Large textile mill employing 700+ workers built on west shore. Dam provides mechanical power for the textile mill.

1903 -- Eight water wheels in operation providing mechanical power by means of shafts, pulley, and belts.

1913 -- First electrical generators installed.

1973 -- Bates Manufacturing sells its Edwards Division to Miller Industries saving 800 area jobs. Edwards name goes with the sale.

1974 -- 150' of dam washes out in winter flood.

1975 -- Dam repaired despite pleas from fisheries biologists.

Early 1980's -- Textile mill ceases operation. All workers laid off.

1984 -- Edwards Manufacturing Co. signs 15-year contract to sell electricity at approximately 3 times market price to Central Maine Power.

1986 -- Maine Department of Marine Resources initiates fisheries restoration for alewife.

1987 -- Kennebec Hydro Developers Group (seven up-river dams) signs fisheries restoration agreement with State of Maine with commitments to restore alewife, American shad, and Atlantic salmon. Edwards refuses to participate.

--Kennebec River Anglers Coalition formed to advocate for dam removal and fisheries restoration.

1988 -- Edwards installs experimental fish pump to assist KHDG fisheries restoration effort.

1989 -- Kennebec Coalition (American Rivers, the Atlantic Salmon Federation, the Natural Resources Council of Maine, Trout Unlimited and its Kennebec Valley Chapter) formed to advocate for dam removal through the federal relicensing process.

--Massive fire destroys the closed textile mill buildings at the site.

--Hydro generation equipment rebuilt following fire. Remains of mill buildings demolished.

1991 -- Edwards applies for new 50 year license to expand capacity from 3.5 to 11.5 megawatts.

--Governor McKernan calls for dam removal.

--Maine Legislature adopts resolve calling for dam removal.

