



Friends of Merrymeeting Bay (FOMB) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our mission is to preserve, protect, and improve the unique ecosystems of the Bay through:

## Education

## Conservation & Stewardship

## Research & Advocacy

## Member Events

Support comes from members' tax-deductible donations and gifts.

Merrymeeting News is published seasonally and is sent to FOMB members and other friends of the Bay.

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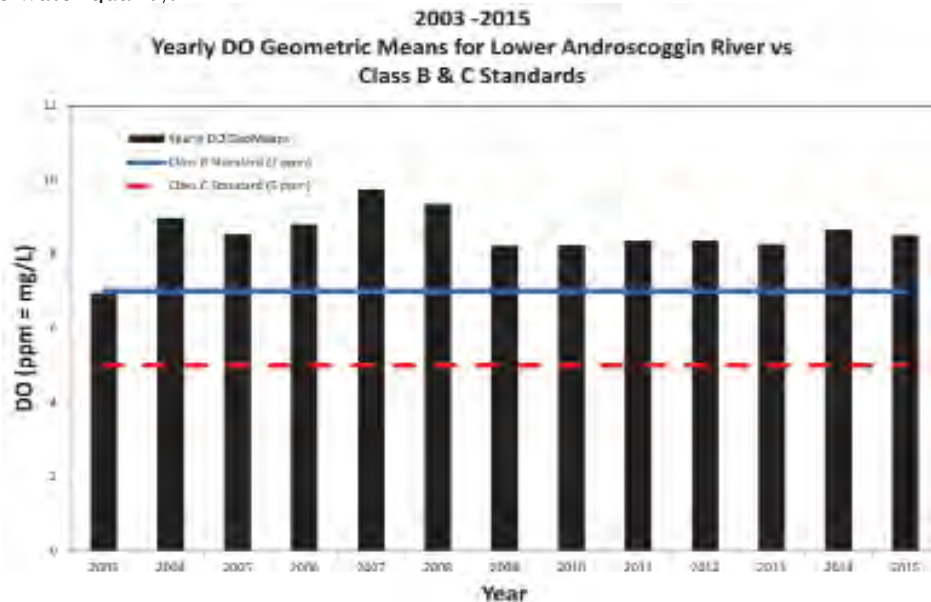
## LOWER ANDROSCOGGIN RECLASSIFICATION UPDATE

Early this spring the DEP, variously termed the Department of Environmental Protection or Department of Economic Protection, solicited recommendations for classification upgrades to water bodies around the state. We again nominated the lower Androscoggin for Class B, up from Class C. Our waters are classified from C (minimum) to AA (the cleanest and healthiest). Because the Clean Water Act and state statute have antidegradation language in them, once a waterway attains a higher classification, the quality cannot be allowed to backslide without substantial review and approval by the EPA.

38 M.R.S.A. § 464 (F) (4)

*When the actual quality of any classified water exceeds the minimum standards of the next highest classification, that higher water quality must be maintained and protected. The board shall recommend to the Legislature that water be reclassified in the next higher classification.*

Maine's classification parameters are based on amount of dissolved oxygen (DO), bacteria and aquatic life [macroinvertebrate types present). Under the Clean Water Act and Maine statute the process is to be "goal oriented." Which is to say, when a water body is close to attaining the next higher classification, it should be upgraded. This way the Act acts as a stimulus to improve water quality.



Maine's Water Quality Classification System is goal-based.

*When proposing an upgrade in classification, recommend waters that either presently attain or with reasonable application of improved treatment or Best Management Practices (BMPs), could reasonably be expected to attain, the standards and criteria of a higher proposed class.*

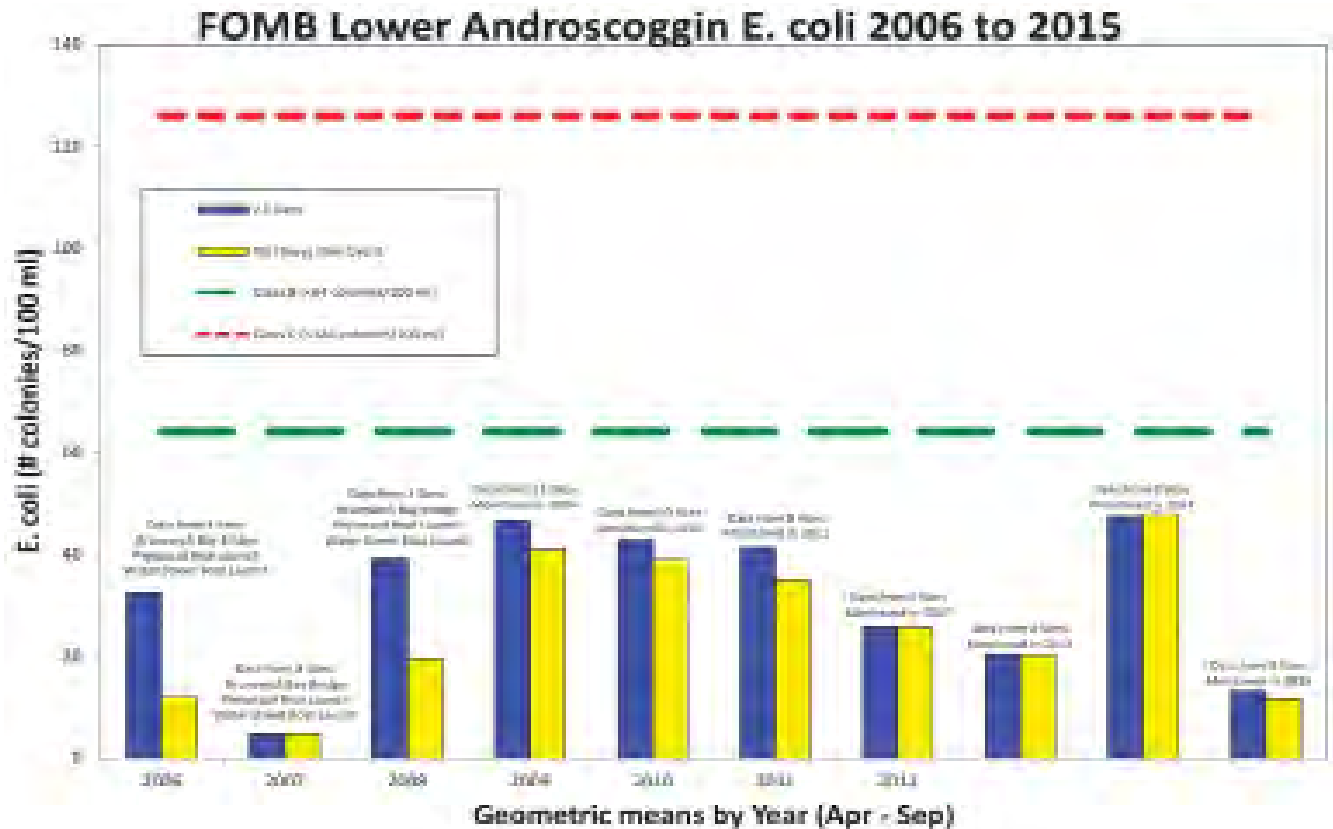
## LOWER ANDROSCOGGIN (CONTINUED)

In reality and sharp contrast, the DEP (definitely the Department of Economic Protection) depends on other circumstances to improve water quality by chance, like a dam removal or mill closure. The Department refuses to take a pro-active approach using the available water reclassification tool at their disposal.

An upgrade of classification on the lower Androscoggin between Worumbo dam in Lisbon Falls and Merrymeeting Bay is well deserved and borne out by FOMB's years of data collection. Our upgrade proposals over the years have been supported by Brunswick, Topsham, Durham, Lewiston and Auburn as well as the Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust, Conservation Law Foundation, Friends of Casco Bay, Androscoggin River Alliance, Maine Audubon, Natural Resources Council of Maine and the Atlantic Salmon Foundation. Senator (or Representative depending on the term) Tom Saviello from Wilton and the DEP, continues to block water quality upgrades on the Androscoggin, poster child for the Clean Water Act.

At a late May DEP meeting/hearing on this round of 15 proposed reclassifications the Department made clear they would not recommend the Androscoggin. From 2009-2017 under the auspices of the DEP Volunteer River Monitoring Program, we collected approximately 1,500 bacteria and dissolved oxygen measurements. Of this total and in the period between May-September when DEP records data we had only 2 slight exceedances of the class B parameter for bacteria and 10 instances when DO levels dipped slightly below the class B level. These instances were well within a margin of error.

Again: "Maine's Water Quality Classification System is (supposed to be) goal-based. *When proposing an upgrade in classification, recommend waters that either presently attain or with reasonable application of improved treatment or Best Management Practices (BMPs), could reasonably be expected to attain, the standards and criteria of a higher proposed class.*"



## REMEMBERING GERALDINE & SANFORD NICKERSON

Former FOMB member and Bath native, Geraldine Coombs passed away December 27, 2017. Gerry was a 1942 graduate of Morse High School, then Bates College in Lewiston, and Perkins Institution for the Blind's Teacher Training Program in Watertown, MA. This latter experience led to several years of work with blind children in Maine. In 1947, she married John Warren Coombs of Bath. They were married for 58 years prior to his passing in 2005.

Gerry was tremendously active in the Bath community all of her life. During the 1950's and 60's, she served as a Girl Scout leader and Kennebec Girl Scout Council representative and for over 75 years Gerry was an active member of the United Methodist Church of Bath, having served as a Church School Superintendent, Chairperson of Education, Trustee, Lay Leader, and Delegate to the United Methodist Annual Conference. As a member of the Outreach Committee, she represented Methodists on the Bath Area Food Bank Board for many years, and was involved in several Habitat for Humanity and home building projects as well as the Bridge Coffee House for teenagers and young adults.



A charter member of the Literacy Volunteers of Bath, Gerry actively served for 30 years in several capacities, as treasurer, librarian and ESL tutor. Returning to teaching in the early 1970's, Mrs. Coombs taught remedial reading and special education students in the Bath and Brunswick School systems for 11 years, retiring in 1985. During this period, she received her Master of Science in Education Degree from the University of Southern Maine. In 1992, the Bath Community Forestry Committee was formed, on which Gerry, a charter member, was active for 20 years as a chairperson, Druid Park Promoter, and advocate for Bath trees. In 2012 she was honored at Bath Citizens Involvement Day as Citizen of the Year.



Near the end of March, FOMB received a phone call from Gerry's son Paul letting us know Gerry had left FOMB a very generous bequest in honor of her father Sanford. Born in 1897, the same year as successful Yukon miners returned to Seattle beginning the Klondike Gold Rush, Sanford grew up on Merrymeeting Bay and it remained one of his favorite haunts along with far northern Maine.

Quite the sportsman, he had a love for sailing but hunted and fished actively all over Maine. Sanford kept a gunning float in Merrymeeting Bay which he used extensively. According to Paul, Sanford enjoyed having particularly good looking birds or fish mounted by a taxidermist and that some of them were quite large! Mostly, Paul said, his father just loved being outdoors as many Baymen of his generation did. In 1994, Sanford died at 97 years old. On May 6th of that year, Nelson Mandela, at 75 was elected first black president of South Africa.

*Our thanks and condolences to Paul and his sister Eileen, and of course our thanks to their special mom!*

## Alewives

April pulls from the belly  
of the sea—eighty fathoms deep  
and countless thousand strong,  
green-backed silvery thugs,  
with wild black eyes,  
and sharp forked tails.  
Gill netted in the lower reaches,  
trapped in fish weirs  
along grassy shoals,  
snatched in dip-nets  
by men in skiffs  
to be packed and salted  
in chum-tubs for bait,  
—good bait!  
—a fine bait!  
for haddock and pollack,  
for lobsters and blues.  
Alewives choke the rivers,  
slugging gill to gill  
past diving cormorants  
and savage gulls,  
gasp in cool eddies  
behind sunken logs,  
slither up rivulets  
no wider than a skipping  
boy's leap  
to tepid ponds  
where red winged black-  
birds clutch reeds;  
shale torn flesh quivers  
plumes of milky white  
over ripened nests  
of eggs in mud.  
Then back to the estuaries,  
bloodied and bowed,  
to fatten in warm currents  
before fall tides  
drive them back,  
back to the cold  
black belly of the sea.

Joseph Coleman. Used with permission of the author. [www.josephcolemanpoetry.com](http://www.josephcolemanpoetry.com)



## SPRING BAY DAY, MAY 15, 2018

### Schools:

Pittston-38 students, Woolwich-33 students, Harriet Beecher Stowe [Brunswick]-65 students, Chop Pt. School-10 students. 148 total.

### Many thanks to our Guides/ Topic

Leslie Anderson/ Tree walk, Betsy Steen/ Nature walk, Fred Koerber & Chris Gutscher/ Archaeology, Jason Bartlett (DMR)/ Beach Seining, Nate Gray (DMR) & Becky Bowes/ Anadromous Fish Printing, Hannah Goodman/ Where the Wild Things Are!, Grant Connors/ Wildlife Ecology, Katie Gilbert, Caroline Carter, Katherine King (Marine Mammal Rescue)/ Save our Seals, Cathy Reynolds/ Insect Pollinators, Jamie Silvestri (Artvan) & Carmine Leighton/ Environmental Art, Megan Woods (DEP-Americorps)/ Macroinvertebrates, George Sergeant & Mark Gershman/ Bird walk, Steve Eagles & Kent Cooper (DOT)/ Watershed Modeling, and Bethany Brown/Caring for Critters.

### And thanks as well to our Chaperones

Tina Phillips, Tom Hughes, David Hammond, Bill Heaphy, Ann Hartzler, Pam Hanson, Carole Sargent, Heather Cox, Martha Spiess, Tom Walling, Tina Goodman, Bob Goldman, David Whittlesey, Dana Cary, Elise Strauss-Bowers and Joan Llorente.

### And last but certainly not least!...

Chop Pt.School and Wild Oats Bakery!!!!

**Was it a good day? Look at our photos and you decide!**



Photo: Brendan Bullock



Photo: Ed Friedman



*Photos:*

*Top: Brendan Bullock, Brendan Bullock*

*Middle: Jamie Silvestri, Ed Friedman*

*Bottom: Brendan Bullock, Jamie Silvestri*



## SHAD WARS: A LONG, VIOLENT PERIOD IN LANCASTER COUNTY OVER A FISH IN THE SUSQUEHANNA

For hundreds of years in Lancaster County, one of the most anticipated and important times of the year was when shad and bloodroots bloomed. That was when millions of migratory American shad flooded from the Atlantic Ocean into the Susquehanna River, surging upstream to reproduce in such mass that they pushed the water into waves 3-4 feet high. For Native Americans and, later, Pennsylvania colonists, shad, or “poor man’s salmon,” delivered a badly needed source of protein and burst of flavor after a long, lean winter. Their roe was considered a delicacy. For the brief month or so the run lasted, shad were sold throughout Lancaster County in markets and from carts along the river from Columbia to Pequea.

The islands and rocks advantageous for catching the millions of shad on their migratory runs became so important during this time that the rights to shad fisheries were used to settle bills and the spots were passed on to sons in wills. But fighting over the rights to strategic places — and later rancor over the building of dams blocking the great migration — also touched off one of the more violent periods in Lancaster County history.

Mob violence — even murder — followed the arrival of shad from 1738 through the Civil War.

Hollis Bedell, a York County resident and retired college botany professor, recently revisited the troubled times in a presentation, “Trouble on the Susquehanna: The Shad Wars,” during a Susquehanna Heritage talk at the Zimmerman Center for Heritage in Long Level.



Nowhere was the shad run more important or as intensely fished as the section of the river between Columbia and Safe Harbor. Locals used seine nets, rock fish weirs, gill nets and dip nets to intercept the fish.

The importance of the Susquehanna’s shad is hard to appreciate today.

Shad became one of Colonial America’s first exports back to Great Britain and Europe. George Washington invested heavily in the shad fishery, using slave labor to catch the fish from his holdings along the Potomac River. Thus, shad are also known as the “founding fish.” Pennsylvania’s founder, William Penn, in trying to entice British to the New World, extolled the virtues of shad.

*Credit: Connecticut River Museum*

Later, fighting over the shad in Lancaster County and efforts to restore the fish blocked by dams resulted in the formation of the Pennsylvania Fish Commission in 1866. In 1731, residents of Manor Township complained to Colonial authorities about a mill dam being built across the Conestoga River, blocking the shad run. Taking matters into their own hands, neighbors ripped out the dam one night. When it was rebuilt, disgruntled residents tore it down again. This went on for seven years and finally prompted the first legislation requiring dams to have some means of a fish passage in 1761. But the law was rarely enforced. By 1775, there was a Fishing Society of Lancaster County, a vigilante group of fishermen who enforced the law themselves.

In 1793, friction over taking fishing rights away from the common man surfaced when the commonwealth settled Revolutionary War debts with veterans by granting them shad-fishing rights to many of the islands in the Susquehanna in Lancaster County. Matters deteriorated further in 1830 when the first dam across the Susquehanna was built between Columbia and Wrightsville to supply water to the new Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal. Another canal dam was built near the mouth of the Conestoga at Safe Harbor.

By now, commercial fisheries were firmly established in this section. Groups from the two areas feuded. Each poached on the other’s territory and used fishing techniques that had been outlawed. They frequently attacked each other’s dams to keep the shad moving. In 1862, a group of anglers caught poaching on an island were fired on and one York County resident died on Shad Island in Washington Boro. Griffin cannons made in Safe Harbor were once used to thwart a raid by the Columbia shad fishers. Finally, in 1866, the state forced the owners of the Columbia Dam to put in a fish passageway. But locals, loathe to share their bounty with upriver towns, would plant pieces of moving metal in the water to scare the shad away from the passageways.

The Fish Commission’s first fish wardens were occasionally sent down to quell the violence and stop the illegal activity. In a well-reported incident documented in local newspapers, five fish wardens sent to Columbia had their boat overturned by locals. When they swam to the Columbia shoreline they were assaulted by residents. They spent the night locked inside a room in a local hotel while an angry mob milled outside, according to Bedell. After that incident, fish wardens were allowed to carry firearms.

# WE NEED YOU! PLEASE SUPPORT OUR IMPORTANT WORK

## FOMB Leadership

Our accomplishments are due to the hard work of dedicated volunteers, especially those who serve on our committees. If you want to get involved and serve, please contact the committee chair or Ed Friedman. We always welcome member input and we'd love for you to join us!

### Steering Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair (Bowdoinham)  
 Vance Stephenson, Treasurer (Kettering, OH)  
 Tom Walling, Secretary (Bowdoinham)  
 Simon Beirne (Bowdoinham)  
 Becky Bowes (Brunswick)  
 Phil Brzozowski (Pittston)  
 Nate Gray (Vassalboro)

### Education Committee

Betsy Steen, Co-Chair, 666-3468  
 Tom Walling, Co-Chair, 666-5837

### Conservation and Stewardship Committee

Chair Vacancy

### Membership and Fundraising Committee

Nate Gray, Chair, 446-8870

### Research and Advocacy Committee

Ed Friedman, Chair, 666-3372

Friends of Merrymeeting Bay • PO Box 233 • Richmond, Maine 04357

### Membership Levels

- |   |   |                                     |
|---|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Sturgeon  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Striped Bass | <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Smelt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$750 American Eel | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Shad         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Wild Salmon  | <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Alewife       |                                     |

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

\$7 Enclosed (optional) for a copy of *Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Land Owners* [\$5 for book, \$2 for postage].

- |                                     |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Renewal    | <input type="checkbox"/> Send information about volunteer opportunities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> New Member | <input type="checkbox"/> I would like a sticker                         |



Thanks to Will Zell and Zellous.org for newsletter layout.

## SHAD (CONTINUED)

The shad wars only died out after the hydroelectric dam built at Holtwood in 1910 irrevocably blocked upriver migration with a wall of concrete. Today, despite decades of efforts to restore the shad migration to the Susquehanna through fish lifts over dams and shad stocking, the great runs heralded by spring blooms are but a colorful memory.

However, you can still buy shad locally. Mr. Bill's Fresh Seafood, for example, sells shad fillets and roe at its store at 430 Harrisburg Pike in Lancaster and at its stand in Central Market from late February until late April or early May. The shad are caught by commercial fishermen in rivers with shad runs from Georgia to Connecticut. But, not from the Susquehanna, where shad are off-limits. "Back in the day, say 1983, we were buying 1,000 pounds at a shot," recalls Tim Glatfelter, Mr. Bill's owner and general manager. "I would sell all of them. It was all about the taste for people from their childhood.

"It's kinda sad. There's fewer and fewer people coming in and telling their stories of going down to the river to catch shad."

Ad Crable, Lancasteronline, March 31, 2018

*"It was a tradition, even in the colonial days, to stop farming, stop what you were doing and suddenly become fishermen because [shad] was so plentiful. It was the fish that fed farmers and everyday fishermen and working-class people. It was their fish for that period of time, so it developed this kind of folklore of being the fish of the people of Connecticut."...Amy Trout, Curator, CT River Museum*





Friends of Merrymeeting Bay  
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*Photo: Dr. Kim Gillis, Abbagadassett River Mouth*