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Press Release

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press release announcing the opening of the Grand Falls Dam. "It is important also to all the creatures that depend on alewives for food—cod, halibut, pollock, ospreys, and eagles, to name a few. We call alewives 'the fish that feeds all.'"

Flagg said dating back to the 1800s alewife vessels came as far away as Rhode Island to pick up shipments of alewives and shad harvested from the river. At that time, fishermen, Flagg said, were harvesting 2,000 barrels of fish annually, which included more than 700,000 fish.

"They were important from a sustenance standpoint, as well as a source of income for those who sold their catches to the vessels that came to the area."

According to the Department of Marine Resources, "the bulk of the harvest during the 1800s was for human consumption, because they kept exceptionally well in salt or when smoked. The demand for alewives for human consumption declined with the widespread use of refrigeration in the 20th century that made many other fish species available to the market."

*Natural History Magazine* published an article in 2012 that stated "From the earliest colonial times, alewives have been economically important. With their high fat content, their arrival when other food stocks were low made them valuable as a food source, eaten fresh, salted and smoked. In New England, many coastal communities provided free alewives to their poor or elderly citizens. There was a flourishing trade in smoked salted alewives sent to the West Indies to feed the slave populations on the "sugar islands" of the Caribbean."

It went on the say, "from Colonial times to the present day, the biological riches of the Atlantic seaboard have been under assault through overfishing on marine and anadromous stocks, the erection of dams without fish passage, and pollution from the discharge of municipal and industrial wastes. None of those problems went unnoticed. There are numerous records



Pulpwood fetches up at Grand Falls.

documenting the loss of anadromous fisheries, dating back almost 300 years."

Flagg said he hoped the dams on the St. Croix stay open so the alewife population bounces back to what it once was.

"Hopefully it is heading in the right direction and the population builds back up to provide a benefit to the local people and the people that come from other parts of Maine to the St. Croix River," Flagg said. 🦋

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