

## Kingston's Elm Street Dam removal serves as an example

By Kathryn Gallerani

[kgallerani@wickedlocal.com](mailto:kgallerani@wickedlocal.com)

Posted Nov 29, 2019 at 10:04 AM

Updated Nov 29, 2019 at 10:04 AM

Blue black herring, sea lamprey, rainbow smelt, tomcod, river herring, American shad, white perch, American eel, sea run brook trout, and making a special appearance - the Happy Fish.

KINGSTON – Blue black herring, sea lamprey, rainbow smelt, tomcod, river herring, American shad, white perch, American eel, sea run brook trout, and making a special appearance - the Happy Fish.

At the Elm Street Restoration Celebration last Friday, Herman Wanningen, a World Fish Migration instigator from The Netherlands, shared the meaning behind the Happy Fish symbol as he pulled it from the Jones River to shore at 42 Elm St.

The Happy Fish represents the fish that are free to migrate up and down entire stretches of river to spawn, feed and carry out their life cycles. Wanningen said the Elm Street Dam removal can serve as an example for Europe of how dam removal can be accomplished.

“This is an inspiration for Europe; this is an inspiration for the rest of the world showing that it’s possible to remove dams,” he said. “It’s a big discussion in Europe as well. What do we do with these hundreds of thousands of old dams in Europe. Projects like this show that it’s possible.”

National Marine Fisheries Service Deputy Regional Administrator Kim Damon-Randall, representing the Greater Atlantic Regional Office, said they are lucky to have the Happy Fish in Kingston, but next spring, the focus will be on thousands

of real happy fish migrating up the Jones River.

“It’s because of the hard work of the people gathered here today that the potential exists for significantly larger runs of river herring and rainbow smelt, species which are near and dear to my heart, to make their annual spawning migration up the Jones River,” she said.

These fish are important not only to the Jones River and the town of Kingston but to the broader marine ecosystem in the Atlantic, she said. River herring are part of the backbone of recreational and commercial fisheries in the region and also support a robust ecotourism in the region.

A World Fish Migration art contest based on last year’s Happy Fish Challenge is underway, with the winners of the Fish Migration Award to be announced on World Fish Migration Day, May 16, 2020. [Jones River Watershed Association Executive Director Pine duBois](#) encourages local entries to the contest online at [StateFishArt.org](#).

Friday’s celebration had an international flair, but it was not all positivity.

Roberta Benefiel, of [Grand Riverkeeper Labrador Inc.](#), an organization opposing mega dams in Canada as part of the North American Megadam Resistance Alliance, spoke about the challenges facing riverkeepers for the sake of cheaper power.

Kingston was one of their stops on the Northeast Megadam Speaker Tour of the northeast to raise awareness of the impact of Canadian Hydro on indigenous rights and the environment.

*Follow Kathryn Gallerani on Twitter [@kgallreporter](#).*