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## **Dredging the Kennebec: A significant loss**

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Fiddler's Reach, where the dredging spoils are being dumped in river.

*by Gina Hamilton*

PHIPPSBURG -- The shellfish community and the summer tourism industry in Phippsburg is bracing for turbid waters and a possible loss of their all-important summer income as the Army Corps of Engineers begins the process of dredging the Kennebec River near BIW in order to safely deliver the *U.S.S. Spruance* in September.

The death knell for the hopes of the community, as well as the hopes of several organizations dedicated to the health of the estuary, including Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, sounded last week, when a federal judge in Bangor ruled against the plaintiffs, who were seeking a temporary injunction until certain federal laws could be examined, in favor of BIW, the Navy, and the Army Corps.

"Despite our best efforts, the court denied our request to limit the scale of the dredging," said Steve Hinchman last Saturday, when he got the final ruling.

On Monday, the Army Corps began the dredging process.

Hinchman was attempting to get a temporary injunction to give the court time to rule on the plaintiffs' contention that the dredging would violate the federal Clean Water Act, and the Endangered Species Act, with respect to a species of sturgeon and the Atlantic Salmon.

Ed Friedman, of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, also contended that laws that protect marine mammals, including seals, are also being violated.

Hinchman and residents said they will keep track of changes in the water from the surface and from the air to have baseline data in case the situation arises again.

Friedman said that he does not know how long the dredging will take. "We've heard everything from a few days to five to six weeks," he said.