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Maine environmental groups sue dam owners failing to protect endangered salmon

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PORTLAND, Maine — Two environmental groups are suing owners and operators of seven dams on the Kennebec and Androscoggin rivers, accusing them of dragging their feet in efforts to protect endangered wild Atlantic salmon.

Four federal lawsuits filed by Friends of Merrymeeting Bay and Environment Maine target the rivers where salmon were declared endangered in 2009 and where the fish are nearly extinct: The Maine Atlantic Salmon Commission last year found only five adult salmon returning to the Kennebec and 10 returning to the Androscoggin.

The two groups want the defendants to move swiftly to protect the dwindling number of Atlantic salmon from being killed by the dams' spinning turbines.

"Unless dam owners stop stalling on basic salmon protection measures, the clock will strike midnight for the remaining Atlantic salmon in the Kennebec and Androscoggin rivers," Ed Friedman, chairman of Friends of Merrymeeting Bay, said Tuesday in a statement.

The Endangered Species Act authorizes citizens to sue those who harm a protected species. The lawsuits, filed Monday, target seven companies over the Weston, Shawmut, Lockwood and Hydro



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