

**Q. Does the dam have historical value?**

**A.** New Hampshire takes great pride in its rich history, and part of the dam removal planning process is to assess the project's potential to impact historical resources. In accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, the State Historic Pres-



*The historic Homestead Woolen Mill Dam and Thompson Covered Bridge.*

ervation Office must be consulted about the project as early as possible in the project planning process. They may recommend further study to determine the historic value of the site, based on both archaeological and architectural criteria. At some project sites the dam's historic contributions are honored with interpretive signs, recovered mill stones and other information. In other cases, when a dam is historically significant, dam removal may not be appropriate and other alternatives may need to be considered.

**Q. How will the dam's removal affect fish and wildlife habitats in the area?**

**A.** Dams alter the natural physical, biological and chemical functions of rivers. And, since healthy rivers are considered the lifeblood of healthy habitats, dams can re-



sult in unsustainable and degraded conditions for a variety of aquatic and terrestrial species. The habitats that have been created solely because of the dam's presence will change if the dam is removed. For instance, a deep water marsh may be restored to a shallow marsh or a wet meadow. The NH Fish and Game Department and other natural resources agencies can help provide site-specific information and predicted changes.



**Q. Who will pay for the dam's removal?**

**A.** This varies with the site, the potential for ecological restoration, and the financial ability of the dam owner. DES's River Restoration Coordinator at (603) 271-3406 may be able to help identify public and private funding sources to offset the costs of the project.

**For More Information**

DES River Restoration Coordinator  
NH Department of Environmental Services  
29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95  
Concord, NH 03302-0095  
(603) 271-3406

[www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/damremoval](http://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/damremoval)

# Selective DAM Removal in New Hampshire

Restoring Rivers,  
Enhancing Communities,  
Creating Opportunities



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**NH Department of  
Environmental Services**

## Selective Dam Removal in NH

There are more than **5,000** active and inactive dams in New Hampshire. The majority of these dams were built during the Industrial Revolution and played vital roles in New Hampshire's economic growth during that period. However, as times have changes so have the need for some dams.

Today, some dams in New Hampshire help enhance recreational uses, provide flood control, and aid in hydropower production. But some dams are old and no longer used. When the costs associated with a dam outweigh its benefits, dam removal may be a wise decision, one that can result in significant environmental, economic and social benefits.



### The Benefits of Selective Dam Removal

- Eliminates a public safety hazard
- Provides cost savings to taxpayers and dam owners (both short and long-term)
- Improves water quality
- Eliminates barriers to fish and other aquatic species
- Restores river habitats
- Creates new, river-based recreational opportunities
- Improves opportunities for riverfront revitalization



*The Bearcamp River Dam as it was being removed.*

### The Process of Removing a Dam in New Hampshire

The Department of Environmental Services has created the Dam Removal and River Restoration Program to assist dam owners and communities through the dam removal process. Information on the program and the dam removal process can be found at [www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/damremoval](http://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dam/damremoval)



*The Bearcamp River flowing freely post-dam removal.*



## Dam Removal FAQs

### Q. What will the restored river look like?

**A.** Generally the easiest way to predict how a river would look if a dam were removed is to look at the river upstream of the impoundment and downstream of the dam. Unless there is a significant geologic feature, such as a waterfall, in the impounded stretch of the river, it is unlikely that the restored river will be significantly different than what is seen in free-flowing parts of the river.



*A restored area in Henniker along the Contoocook River following dam removal.*

### Q. Will there be an increase in flooding?

**A.** This would only be a concern if the dam actually provides flood control. In fact, only about 2 percent of New Hampshire's dams provide flood control. It is important to note that dams can actually increase the risk of flooding both downstream and upstream of the dam, due to dam disrepair and/or misoperation.