

BRIGGSVILLE DAM REMOVAL PROJECT

fact sheet



Also known as the "Hewatt Pond Dam," the Briggsville Dam is 15.5 feet high, 145 feet long and made of concrete and masonry.



Work is underway to remove the dam, which will open over 30 miles of the North Branch of the Hoosic River to fish passage.

Work is underway to remove the Briggsville Dam in the town of Clarksburg, Massachusetts and restore the North Branch of the Hoosic River. The 15 foot high and 145 foot long dam will be removed to improve cold water habitat for native fish species and save jobs by eliminating the need for costly repairs.

A diverse group of local, state and federal entities and individuals are leveraging resources to improve wildlife habitat, enhance the community and stimulate the local economy.

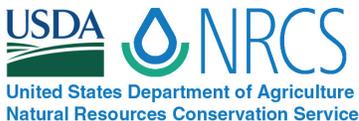
The dam is owned by Cascade School Supplies, which purchased the building – and the dam with it – about five years ago. Shortly thereafter, the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety mandated the inspection of every dam in the state and the Briggsville Dam was classified as needing significant repairs.

What work will happen here?

The dam will be removed in a carefully controlled manner, protecting nearby and downstream property. After the structure has been cleared, accumulated sediment will be removed and a natural channel will be formed.

Native riparian species will be planted in the former impoundment which will help to stabilize the banks while restoring native stream and riparian habitat.

Work is expected to be completed by mid-December 2010.



Project partners include Cascade School Supplies, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Rivers, the Town of Clarksburg, the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Trout Unlimited and the Hoosic River Watershed Association.



Eastern brook trout (*Salvelinus fontinalis*)



Slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognattus*)



Longnose sucker (*Catostomus catostomus*) [state-listed]



Briggsville Dam by the numbers

- Total project cost\$768,000
- USDA-NRCS\$379,273
- Mass. DER\$144,000
- Wildlife Action Fund\$85,000
- Lead agencyMass. DER
- Total project areaapprox. 1 acre
- Start date2006
- Earthwork material11,000 cubic yards
- Miles of stream opened to fish passage
.....over 30 miles

Why is this work necessary?

The Briggsville Dam has blocked upstream movement of aquatic species since the 1840s. In addition, the dam has changed the flood regime, negatively impacted water quality by increasing water temperatures in the impoundment, and has altered the downstream movement of beneficial sediment. The Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety considers the dam a Significant Hazard in Poor Condition.

What are the environmental and community benefits?

The restoration will improve over 30 miles of high quality headwater streams and exemplary trout habitat, and will benefit native river species, including Eastern brook trout, slimy sculpin, longnose sucker and other native fish species. The longnose sucker is a state-listed species of concern. The improved habitat diversity will benefit coldwater species that rely on cold, swiftly moving, oxygenated water to support their spawning.

Removing the dam will improve instream and riparian habitat, restore natural riverine functions, remove the threat of dam failure to the downstream properties and reduce the risk of upstream flooding.

Dam removal will also help Cascade School Supplies retain jobs. The company faced the prospect of abandoning the facility, laying off employees, and leaving the community without one of its largest employers if they had to fund dam repairs or removal. Cascade School Supplies has been in business for 78 years and seasonally employs over 150 people in Northern Berkshire County.

History of the Briggsville Dam

The Briggsville (aka Hewatt Pond) Dam was constructed in 1848 as part of the Briggs Brothers/Strong, Hewatt Company complex. The structure was repaired and modified at numerous times over its life to support the woolen textile mills operated with the power produced by the falling water.

Textile manufacturing at the site ceased around 1970 and the mill buildings were subsequently used for a series of light industrial purposes by numerous owners.

For more information:

- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service: www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov
- Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration: www.mass.gov/dfwele/der
- American Rivers: www.americanrivers.org
- US Fish & Wildlife Service: www.fws.gov
- Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture: www.easternbrooktrout.org