



**Public Service  
of New Hampshire**

The Northeast Utilities System

Press Release

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Bearcamp River Dam to Be Removed

River restoration success through public-private partnership

Concord, NH - The dam's eight 20-foot high piers rise from the picturesque Bearcamp River like giant concrete teeth, and their removal will take place throughout the month of September. Removing the Bearcamp River Dam in South Tamworth will allow 28 miles of river to flow unobstructed by manmade structures.

The dam's removal is made possible by a diverse partnership of public and private sponsors with a shared dedication to restore the Bearcamp River and eliminate a public safety hazard. The N.H. Department of Environmental Services (DES) River Restoration Program is coordinating the project and the DES Dam Maintenance Crew is conducting the physical removal of the dam. The estimated cost of removing the dam is \$124,000.

"On this very site, 74 years ago today," noted DES Commissioner Michael P. Nolin, "men were hard at work constructing the Bearcamp River Dam. As in many places throughout New Hampshire, the power of a river was the inspiration to build a dam that enabled a business and improved the quality of many lives. But the dam has long since outlived its useful purpose, and we are now inspired by the restoration of a free-flowing Bearcamp River, and

the natural values that it provides our communities and our environment."

Flowing from its headwaters in the Sandwich Range Wilderness of the White Mountains to its confluence with Ossipee Lake, the Bearcamp River watershed provides excellent habitat for native brook trout, wild brown trout and landlocked Atlantic salmon. Anglers already enjoy excellent fishing in the Bearcamp River. The dam's removal will improve fish movement and further enhance fishing opportunities, as well as restore natural habitat conditions at the dam and impoundment site. The dam has also blocked the movement of woody material that would naturally have been distributed downstream, providing important habitat structure and nutrients to fish and other aquatic species.

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department is providing significant financial support through a grant from the Inland Fisheries Habitat Restoration and Enhancement Program, which is funded through a small fee on fishing licenses.

"We are pleased to be a partner in this project, which will restore fish habitat and improve public access and recreational opportunities," said Lee Perry, Executive Director of the N.H. Fish and Game Department. "On behalf of the Department, I thank all of the partners and New Hampshire anglers for their financial contribution."

The dam's removal will increase high quality recreational fishing opportunities that are important to the economy of New Hampshire. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has estimated that in 2001, anglers spent over \$160 million in New Hampshire. The Bearcamp River is also popular with paddlers. A picturesque gorge and Class IV rapids are located just upstream from the dam, and paddlers are looking forward to the removal of this safety hazard.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is also funding the river restoration project. Michael Bartlett, Supervisor of the Service's New England Field Office said, "The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has been working for years through various venues to protect and restore fish populations in America's rivers. Removing unneeded and unsafe dams is the most direct and satisfying means of improving the productivity and biological diversity of the nation's rivers for the benefit of anglers, boaters and other enthusiasts."

Public Service Company of New Hampshire (PSNH), through its parent company Northeast Utilities, is also funding the project through a grant from the Corporate Wetlands Restoration Program (CWRP). The CWRP is a voluntary public-private initiative with a mission to restore degraded freshwater and coastal aquatic habitats. A New Hampshire Chapter of the CWRP has recently formed. CWRP is a national program of the Coastal America Partnership, which is composed of 12 federal departments and agencies, and numerous non-profit organizations, corporate leaders, and environmental consultants.

"PSNH became one of the founding corporate sponsors for the New Hampshire Chapter of the CWRP in 2002," said Dan Comer, Director of Safety, Environmental and Human Services for PSNH. "We are very pleased that a portion of our contribution to that organization is being used for such a worthwhile project as the Bearcamp River Dam removal. This is exactly the type of project that we had hoped to participate in when we made the decision to become part of the NH CWRP. We look forward to a long term relationship with the CWRP as it is one more way that we can expand our environmental stewardship in the state."

The dam consists of eight 20-foot high concrete piers with a foundation resting on bedrock, and is approximately 230 feet long. The concrete structure once supported a timber spillway on an angle with an open face - a unique construction design known as an Ambursen dam. It was built in 1929 to

power Tamworth Industries, which created toys, furniture and pre-fabricated housing. The dam has not served a useful function since a fire destroyed the facility in 1945. A historical interpretive sign, including pictures of the dam during its functional years, will be erected at the site in the future.

Over the years the dam has greatly deteriorated and changed ownership several times. The spillway is now largely absent, but the remaining concrete continues to accumulate wood and other debris more than 12 feet in height, which is a safety concern according to the DES Dam Bureau. In 1997, the DES Dam Bureau inspected the privately-owned dam and issued a letter to the owner to either remove the wood debris on a regular basis, or remove the dam. In the interest of a long-term solution the dam owner chose to remove the dam with the assistance of the New Hampshire River Restoration Task Force. The Task Force is a collaboration of state and federal agencies, conservation groups and other interests with the goal of restoring rivers and eliminating public safety hazards through selective dam removal.

The project is made possible by financial and technical assistance from: N.H. Fish and Game Department, Public Service of New Hampshire, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife, FishAmerica Foundation, Norcross Wildlife Foundation, N.H. Department of Environmental Services, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Saunders Brothers Inc., and Trout Unlimited.

The project also received significant technical support from the New Hampshire River Restoration Task Force, which has a diverse membership. State governmental partners include N.H. Dept. of Environmental Services, N.H. Fish and Game Department, N.H. Division of Historical Resources, and the N.H. Department of Safety, Bureau of Emergency Management. Federal governmental partners include: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, National Park Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the NOAA Restoration Center. Organizational partners include: American Rivers, American Whitewater, Ashuelot River Local Advisory Committee, Coastal Conservation Association, Coldwater Fisheries Coalition, Connecticut River Watershed Council, Conservation Law Foundation, Merrimack Valley Paddlers, New Hampshire Rivers Council, The Nature Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited.

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