

News from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services



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New Hampshire's First Dam Removal for 2008 Begins *Pearl Lake Brook Dam Removal in Lisbon*

Lisbon, NH – On Monday July 14, 2008, the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, the town of Lisbon and project partners will commemorate and initiate the removal of the Pearl Lake Brook Dam, which is located on Pearl Lake Brook. The removal of the dam in its entirety will allow the brook to flow freely for the first time in 73 years. A dam removal and river restoration ceremony will occur at 1 p.m. on July 14, 2008, with the initial breach occurring immediately following. The speakers will include DES Commissioner Thomas Burack, Executive Councilor Raymond Burton, New Hampshire Charitable Foundation's Senior Program Officer Kevin Peterson, and Lisbon Town Administrator Regan Pride. They will be joined by individuals who have shared in the planning, permitting and implementation of this project.

The 14-foot high, 21-foot long, split stone and concrete dam was constructed in 1935 to provide a settling basin for the town's water supply originating upstream at Pearl Lake. A chlorination station was constructed sometime later to sanitize the water prior to being used by the public. Since 1981, when the town ceased to use and maintain the dam, it has continually deteriorated and would require costly restoration and maintenance. Once removed, however, the free-flowing stream will provide much-needed refuge and habitat for resident and migrating aquatic species.

In 2005, Kevin Clement, Lisbon's Department of Public Works director, contacted the DES Dam Removal and River Restoration Program to inquire about removing the dam. "This was an ideal dam to consider for removal because it had not been utilized for its intended purpose for over 25 years," said Deb Loiselle, River Restoration Coordinator for the DES Dam Bureau. "The town had no present or future plans to utilize it as such or for other purposes. Dam removal has extraordinary ecological benefits so it is a win-win situation. After reviewing all of the information pertaining to removing versus maintaining the dam, the town decided to pursue removal."

A project of this complexity does not come to fruition without collaboration, dedication and teamwork on the behalf of all the parties involved. Both technical and financial assistance are necessary components. Technical assistance was provided by the town of Lisbon, the Department of Environmental Services, NH Fish and Game Department, NH Division of Historical Resources, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the NH River Restoration Task Force. In 2007, the town received a grant in the amount of \$18,330 from the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation – Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund. The funding was essential in order to obtain the necessary information for permits to do the work. The Lisbon Public Works Department will be providing the labor and the equipment to successfully remove the dam and chlorination station.

“This is monumental in and of itself because this is the first time a town in New Hampshire has utilized its own resources to remove a dam since the inception of the DES Dam Removal and River Restoration Program in 2001,” states Loiselle. Town officials estimate it will take two weeks to complete the project.

“The town of Lisbon is pleased to begin with the dam removal. With very willing coordination from DES, Fish and Game and others, we look forward to completing this work. We would not be here today without their technical assistance and expertise,” expressed Kevin Clement, Lisbon’s DPW director.

“Not only will we be restoring the brook to its natural flow, we’ll also exercise recycling of the split stone from the dam,” said Town Administrator Regan Pride. “The stone will be used to build a retaining wall along side the waterfall overlook on the Ammonoosuc river near the town hall. This has been a very interesting project and a good learning opportunity in working with DES and the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation.”

The dam played a pivotal role for the residents of Lisbon for many years, but now it is appropriate to return the dam site to mother nature. Pearl Lake Brook is a tributary to the Ammonoosuc River, which is a designated river under the protection of the state’s Rivers Management and Protection Program. The removal of the Pearl Lake Brook Dam will eliminate a barrier to resident and migrating species, and provide essential habitat. The ecological benefits to dam removal are great and with the removal of this dam will provide improved water quality. The temperatures in this area are high and the dissolved oxygen is low. This is not an unusual repercussion when a dam is in place. NH Fish and Game Department conducted fish sampling and water quality sampling in 2007 and plan to continue this effort over the next few years. This pre- and post-removal information is important to quantify the benefits of dam removal. “The dam removal on Pearl Lake Brook will benefit the aquatic life in many ways. From facilitating fish passage to the restoration of stream connectivity, impacts of this project will be positive in many ways,” says Andy Schafermeyer, NH Fish and Game Department Fisheries Biologist.

“This is the first of several dams to be removed in New Hampshire during 2008, and the ninth dam to be removed since the inception of DES Dam Removal and River Restoration Program,” says Loiselle. “Many more projects are being considered and are at various stages of implementation.”

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