Removal of Dam on Middle Fork Holston River to Benefit Wildlife and People in Virginia

Marion, Virginia – Work began today to remove the Marion Ice Plant Dam and an additional fish passage barrier on the Middle Fork of the Holston River. The projects will re-open more than 15 miles of stream and river habitat for multiple endangered species and recreational fish species.

Once complete, the projects are expected to enhance recreational boating and fishing, reduce flooding and protect property, providing more the $9 million in economic benefit to southwest Virginia. Removing these barriers will also address local concerns about public safety near these obsolete structures.

Work on the projects is a collaborative effort among the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable, private landowners, the Town of Marion, Virginia and the Smyth County Economic Development Authority.

“Removing these dams illustrates how fish passage projects benefit people as much as wildlife. We are proud to be part of this collaboration that will not only help rare species, but also create more opportunity for recreational fishing and boating, and provide an economic benefit to area communities,” said Wendi Weber, northeast regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Middle Fork Holston River supports multiple rare and federally listed species such as the slender chub, spotfin chub, yellowfin madtom, tan riffleshell, slabside pearlmussel, fluted kidneyshell, and the shiny pigtoe. The river is also considered a Trout Heritage Water by
Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, who currently stocks trout upstream and downstream of the project area. Funding for the two projects comes from the Service’s Fish Passage Program and Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, with additional support and resources from VDGIF, the Town of Marion, the Upper Tennessee River Roundtable and the Smyth County Economic Development Authority.

“The Upper Tennessee River Roundtable is honored to be part of this collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Part of the UTRR’s vision is to sustain a healthy and diverse ecosystem. We feel that providing better accessibility to this section of stream will be highly beneficial to the aquatic ecosystem,” said Karen Gilmer, chair of the Roundtable's Board of Directors.

"The Town of Marion is pleased to have UTRR and their partners in our community, helping redevelop this historic property into an expanded, enhanced fishing spot for our town," said Marion mayor David Helms. "Since the fire, the remains of the former structure have been a hazard, and this project not only cleans up a dangerous situation but also provides another way to showcase our fishing stream and our abundance of natural resource outdoor recreation."

*Upper Tennessee River Roundtable is a nonprofit organization based in Abingdon that works throughout the Upper Tennessee River basin in Virginia, which includes the Clinch, Holston and Powell rivers. The Roundtable focuses on clean water and partners with many agencies, local governments, other nonprofits and individuals to complete projects that focus on pollution prevention, cleanup and protection of the rivers' water quality.*

*The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit [http://www.fws.gov/northeast/](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/).*

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