

Fish Passage



Early in the history of the United States, thousands of culverts, dikes, water diversions, dams and other artificial barriers were constructed to impound or redirect water for irrigation, flood control, electricity, water supply, and transportation. All of these changed the natural features of countless waterways, blocking the natural migration of fish to historic habitat used for reproduction and growth.



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Today, an estimated 2.5 million artificial barriers, including dams greater than six feet in height, exist throughout the country. Many dams no longer serve their original purpose and were abandoned years ago.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service launched its Fish Passage program in 1999, a voluntary, non-regulatory effort that provides financial and technical assistance to remove or bypass these barriers that are impeding the movement of fish and contributing to their decline.

Fish Passage has become one of the Service's most popular efforts. The program embraces partners from every level of government and a wide range of private and civic conservation groups, most of which add significant matching funds that help stretch taxpayer dollars, and allows citizens at a number of different levels to become directly involved in the kind of restoration work that can have important benefits.

Fish access, natural flows and temperature have been restored to 2,936 miles and 60,782 acres of habitat for trout, herring, striped bass, shad, sturgeon, salmon, minnows and darters. Anglers and commercial and subsistence fishers benefit from larger fish populations, which are distributed across more available habitat. Fish-eating birds

such as eagles, osprey and kingfishers have more forage, and even bears, otters and mink benefit from improved fish populations.

There are spectacular removals, such as the removal of Edwards Dam on Maine's Kennebec River to the repair or removal of culverts and other water diversions. Altogether, the Service identified 436 barriers for removal, at a cost of \$44 million. The Service and its partners will complete those projects as funding becomes available.



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