

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT  
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
PROPOSED POND LILY DAM REMOVAL PROJECT  
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), in partnership with the Connecticut Fund for the Environment's Save the Sound Program, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the New Haven Land Trust, and other partners, is proposing to remove a portion of the Pond Lily Dam on the West River in New Haven, Connecticut.

The purpose of the proposed Project is to restore unimpeded passage for migratory fish in the West River, improve water quality, and enhance recreational opportunities in the Pond Lily Nature Preserve. Additionally, partial removal of the Pond Lily Dam will mitigate the danger of dam failure and the potential for impacts to upstream and downstream communities.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, the regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulation [CFR] 1500-1508), and the implementing regulation (36 CFR 800). The EA analyzes the potential impacts of four alternatives on the human environment. These alternatives include a No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action (preferred alternative), and two additional action alternatives.

The Proposed Action involves removal of approximately half (100 feet) of the stone and earthen dam spillway and excavation of sediment to restore a defined river channel in the approximate historical location of the pre-dammed river. These activities would achieve fish passage and channel restoration but would not impound water. Under Alternative 1, all 191 feet of the Pond Lily spillway would be removed, but no river channel restoration would occur. Under Alternative 2, half of the spillway would be removed, as in the Proposed Action, with alternate locations for an excavated river channel. Under the No Action Alternative, the Pond Lily Dam would be left in place and historical spawning and rearing habitat would continue to be inaccessible to migratory fishes. The Dam would continue to be at risk for failure and the cause of upstream flooding during storm events.

The Proposed Action will have negligible, if any, impacts on natural and cultural resources such as water and air quality, sediment chemistry, threatened and endangered species, fish and wildlife resources, vegetation, and socio-economic resources. Adverse effects to cultural resources, including National Register-eligible or listed cultural resources, will be addressed, pursuant to section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 W.S.C. 470f), through a Memorandum of Agreement between the Service, the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office, and any consulting parties (36 CFR Part 800, and 33 CFR Part 325). There were no objections to the proposed action from either the Mashantucket Pequot or the Mohegan Tribal Historic Preservation Officers.

During the permitting process, there was a 30-day public comment period associated with the Army Corps of Engineers Programmatic General Permit and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Water Quality Permit. Additionally, there have been numerous public and municipal stakeholder meetings, including presentations to the Town of Woodbridge Board of Selectmen, the New Haven City Plan Commission, the Ward 27 Board of Alders management meeting, and a public hearing at the City of New Haven City Hall on April 16, 2014. Public notice for the Project was printed in the New Haven Independent, an English online newspaper, and in La Voz, a Spanish newspaper, April 24 through May 1, 2014. This extensive public involvement has resulted in resounding support from residents and public officials in both Woodbridge and New Haven for the Proposed Action.

Based on review and evaluation of the environmental effects as presented in the EA, the Service has determined that the Pond Lily Dam Removal Project is not a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. The Project will result in a net ecological benefit to the West River and Long Island Sound, and would complement ongoing interagency efforts to restore migratory fish to the Long Island Sound watershed. Therefore, the Service has determined that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued for the proposed Project.

28 May 2015  
Date

  
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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Reference:  
Environmental Assessment, dated May 28, 2015