

# Massachusetts Leads the Northeast in Dam Removal/River Restoration Projects

## Projects restore habitat for fish and wildlife

BOSTON - March 2, 2011 - Massachusetts leads the Northeast in the annual list of states removing dams to benefit rivers and promote healthy ecosystems, according to American Rivers, a national river conservation organization.

Department of Fish and Game's (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER), which coordinates dam removal projects statewide, oversaw the responsible removal of five dams in Massachusetts last year. A total of 16 dams were removed in the six New England states and New York State.

Of the dams removed in Massachusetts last year, the largest was the Briggsville Dam on the North Hoosic River in Clarksburg, adjacent to the city of North Adams. The removal of the 15-foot high and 200-foot long dam restored continuity to more than 30 miles of high-quality headwater streams and exemplary trout habitat. The dam removal also allowed its owner, Cascade School Supplies, to avoid the financial burden of dam ownership, helping to save jobs in its community.

"For ecological, public safety, and economic reasons, the removal of obsolete dams is a sensible technique for dealing with aging dams that impede natural habitats and are expensive to maintain," said Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary (EEA) Richard K. Sullivan Jr., whose office includes DFG. "We're proud of this recognition of our efforts to restore wildlife habitat in our rivers and streams across the state."

"Dam removal is an effective technique to restore a river to provide unimpeded fish passage, improve water quality, and improve recreation conditions by eliminating barriers to navigation and access," said DFG Commissioner Mary Griffin.

Besides the Briggsville Dam in Clarksburg, DER and its partners removed dams in Plymouth, Freetown, and Dalton (two dams) in 2010, and have over other two dozen dam removal projects underway. The Commonwealth tied for second nationally with Michigan for dams removed in 2010.

"Massachusetts has been a leader in the northeast at restoring rivers by removing outdated dams," said American Rivers' River Restoration Director for the Northeast Brian Graber. "These projects not only dramatically improve conditions for fish and other native species, they also improve public safety by eliminating aging structures that pose a significant risk of failure. More dams have been removed in Massachusetts than any other New England state in the last ten years."

"Massachusetts has over 3,000 dams, many of which no longer serve a useful purpose and are degrading aquatic habitat," said Acting DER Director Tim Purinton. "We are seeing dramatic environmental improvements after dam removal including the creation of wetlands, the establishment of floodplain and the return of fish."

For a complete list of the honorees visit the American Rivers website

at [www.AmericanRivers.org/2010DamRemovals](http://www.AmericanRivers.org/2010DamRemovals).

###