

**Waterlines Express - Low Head Dam Removal on Big Blue River**

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In October private crews worked in Edinburgh to remove the Thompson Mill Dam, a low head dam, from the Big Blue River. With the removal now complete, the project will improve stream flow and habitat in the river for several fish, eel, and mussel species, as well as increase safety for those enjoying the river.

Dam infrastructure is aging throughout the state and nation. Many dams are falling into extreme disrepair. The Thompson Mill Dam was one of those. It had water flowing between and under the dam's limestone blocks. Last year, so much water was flowing under the dam that the pool of water behind it often dropped to a very low level.

The dam removal was led by public and private partners that included the town of Edinburgh, the dam's owner, and a private consulting firm. Funded support was provided by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife's Lake and River Enhancement (LARE) Program. Funding decisions and plans to repair, reconstruct, or remove the dam are made by the dam owner. Those decisions are typically made based upon a combination of factors such as safety, history, liability, obsolescence, availability of funds, and both short- and long-term costs of perpetual maintenance, repairs, or removal. In order to preserve material for a future legacy project, many of the limestone blocks were saved by the town.

Low head dams like this one can be dangerous because turbulence and recirculating currents can push victims underwater, and then pull them back to the face of the dam in a repeating cycle. [Learn more](#) about the dangers of low head dams and review a map of low-head dams across



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