

DEMOLITION OF THE BASCULE GATE DAM

The Bascule Gate Dam is located just downstream from the Philadelphia Street bridge in the City of York. The dam was originally installed in 1983 to raise the upstream water level to create a slack water pool for water recreation, such as canoeing and kayaking. The dam included a gate that could be lowered during flood periods.

Since 2016, the dam's gate has been inoperable and stuck in a raised position in which it gathers debris, aggravates flooding, and poses a drowning risk. Since then, the mechanism for operating the dam has further deteriorated, and water has infiltrated the dam control housing.

On March 1, 2018 the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) notified the City of York that the Bascule Gate was noncompliant with flood control requirements on the Codorus Creek. As a result, the City is responsible for removing the dam.

Meanwhile in 2016, the York County Economic Alliance (YCEA) and its partners initiated planning for the Codorus Greenway. Removing the dam was one of the recommended actions in the Codorus Greenway Master Site Development Plan.

In 2021, YCEA secured \$50,000 from the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission towards the cost of dam removal and requested that the City of York contributed \$500,000 in funding from its federal American Rescue Plan Act funding to cover the remainder of the cost. This funding was approved by City Council in October 2022.

After a public bidding process, YCEA awarded the demolition contract to the lowest qualified bidder, a woman-owned, environmental remediation company BrightFields, Inc. The total project cost is anticipated to be \$550,000.

Demolition is anticipated to begin the week of December 4, 2023 and be completed no later than April 30, 2024. Demolition is weather dependent. The first phase of work will include demolition of a building housing the dam gate mechanism and the construction of a bypass channel to lower the water level behind the dam. The second phase will include demolition of the dam and dam foundation and restoration of the site.

1983: Dam constructed

2016: Dam gate fails and is rendered inoperable

2016: YCEA initiates Codorus Greenway planning

2018: USACE notifies City of York of dam's noncompliance

2021: YCEA secures \$50,000 for demolition

2022: City of York allocates YCEA \$500,000 for demolition

September 2023: YCEA awarded demolition contract to BrightFields, Inc. following public bid process

December 2023: Demolition begins

April 2024: Demolition ends



F.A.Q

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is the dam protected as an historic resource?

The dam was constructed in 1983 and is not a designated historic resource nor did it have significant historical significance.

Why are the creek banks muddy?

When the dam is breached, it will expose areas of the creek bed and banks previously under water. Over time, the creek will establish a more natural flow within the levee walls and the banks will become covered in vegetation. Dam removal is only the first phase of a much larger project to improve access to the Codorus Creek, which will include the installation of permanent riparian buffers—or vegetation along the water's edge.

Will the dam removal impact fish or wildlife?

The dam created a slack-water pool upstream that resulted in lower oxygen and higher temperatures. Dam removal will allow a more natural flow that results in cooler water temperatures and higher oxygen levels, which is conducive to higher-quality fishing opportunities and, in turn, is a benefit to area wildlife. For the past 40 years, the dam has restricted fish passage upstream through the City of York, and removing the dam provides the opportunity for more fish species to migrate upstream of the Philadelphia Street bridge. This is one reason the PA Fish & Boat Commission is providing funding for the dam removal.

How are people going to fish in the creek now?

The creek is still open for fishing to the public. Dam removal is only the first phase of a much larger project to improve access to the Codorus Creek, which will include formal fishing access and boat launch points upstream and downstream of the Philadelphia Street bridge. This is one reason the PA Fish & Boat Commission is providing funding for the dam removal. In fact, fishing may become better following demolition, as the dam's removal will allow for fish migration, while lower water temperatures and higher oxygen levels will improve the species available for fishing.

Will dam removal cause environmental issues?

Across the nation, environmental groups support the removal of dams on waterways as a means of improving wildlife habitat, reducing safety concerns and restoring creeks, streams and rivers to their natural flow. Removal of the dam has a significant environmental benefit. The dam removal has been reviewed and fully permitted by the PA Department of Environmental Protection, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the PA Fish & Boat Commission is providing funding to support the project.

Removal of the Bascule Gate Dam also allows the Codorus Greenway to move forward, which has the potential to meet a significant portion of York County's sediment and nutrient reduction goals under its Chesapeake Bay Watershed Improvement Plan.

For more information on the environmental benefits of dam removal, please visit this [American Rivers FAQ document](#).

Is anyone going to clean up all the garbage that is now exposed in the creek bed?

Yes! We are working with the Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper to organize litter clean ups along the exposed banks. The Riverkeeper is a non-profit, volunteer-reliant organization that has spent years promoting the greening of the Codorus Creek. To learn more, donate, or check on dates for clean ups, please [visit their website](#)

F.A.Q

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will dam removal pose a danger to the public or children?

In its current inoperable state, the dam poses a significant public safety risk. It functions as a "low-head dam," which the National Weather Service describes as a "drowning machine" because of its ability to pull down and capture people in its circular flow. The flow is so strong that even strong swimmers and boaters find it difficult to escape. As a result, there have been a number of unfortunate incidents, including drowning deaths, near the dam. Demolition will remove this hazard by restoring the creek's natural flow.

During the demolition process (December 2023 through April 2024), the public is prohibited from accessing the construction site and should use caution at or near the dam. Following demolition, the former dam site will be open to the public, and we recommend the same level of caution as required in accessing any public waterway.

How is this related to the Codorus Greenway project?

Dam demolition is the first step in the Codorus Greenway project. The greenway project is a much larger initiative that has a \$26 million Phase 1 that will stretch from Grantley Avenue to Foundry Plaza, with a trail connection running along the west bank of the levee system. Phase 1 is currently in the permitting process with the US Army Corps of Engineers and the PA Department of Environmental Protection. We anticipate permit approval in Q3 2024, which would allow Phase 1 to begin construction in Q4 2024.

To learn more about the Codorus Greenway project, please visit: www.codoruscreekpa.org

Are you using local taxpayer dollars?

Total project funding is approximately \$550,000. \$500,000 of the funding is coming from the City of York's federal American Rescue Plan Act funds, which is a federal allocation made to municipalities throughout the Country. Recognizing the City was obligated to remove the dam, the federal funding allows this work to occur without impacting the City's operating budget. \$50,000 of the funding is coming from the PA Fish & Boat Commission from a source of funding related to industrial use of the Susquehanna River watershed. This funding is specifically intended to mitigate environmental impacts and improve creek access.

How will this affect boating?

Dam demolition will change the nature of boating. The slackwater portion of the creek directly upstream of the dam will go away. This section of creek was attractive for a small number of boaters seeking a "flat water" experience. However, dam removal will expand the ability of boaters to traverse the City of York without needing to portage around the dam or risk their safety by nearing the dam.

For boaters seeking flat water recreation, [Lake Redman](#) is a 15-minute drive from Foundry Plaza and includes a public boat launch and boat rentals.

How will this affect Foundry Plaza?

Removing the dam will lower the water level at Foundry Plaza. A railing is required at the bottom of the steps for fall protection. The railing will be removed in Phase 1 of the Codorus Greenway project, when the concrete steps will be extended to the new water level and an ADA accessible fishing ramp will be constructed on the upstream side of the plaza at water level.