

Kinneytown Dam Removal Project

Community Q&A

Responses to Unanswered Questions from Ansonia Community Meeting

At the first community meeting held August 28, 2024 at the Ansonia Senior Center and online, the Kinneytown Dam Removal project team fielded questions from community members online and in the room. Several questions were answered live and can be found in the meeting recording. All questions that the team captured but did not have time to answer that night are presented with responses below. This document was first posted and distributed to community members on September 10, 2024.

Question Topics

Project Timeline / Process2

Fish and Wildlife3

Flooding3

Development / Future of the Site3

Sediment Management.....5

Recreation.....5

Community Engagement6

Sewer Relocation6

Public Safety6

Project Timeline / Process

Question: How long did the whole process take, from getting the grants up to this point?

Answer: As explained in the presentation, NVCOG's involvement with Kinneytown Dam began around 2014 when local environmentalist Kevin Zak shared footage of failed fish passage with NVCOG. After 8 years of documenting site conditions and communicating with regulators at FERC, NVCOG applied for and received a grant from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration in 2022 to remove the dam, and received that funding in April 2023. Although it may feel like the project is moving fast, 2024 marks a full decade of NVCOG's involvement with Kinneytown Dam.

Question: Given that we were under the impression this project was far from being a reality, could you explain how it has progressed to this point since the project team last visited the neighborhood?

Answer: When NVCOG and Save the Sound canvassed the neighborhood in April of this year, we informed residents that work would begin shortly on the Kinneytown Dam property. So far, sediment sampling and a property survey have been undertaken, and we are now in the process of hiring an engineering firm. Therefore, we are still in the early stages of the removal and restoration process. Design and decommissioning will begin this year and continue through 2025 and part of 2026. We anticipate deconstruction to take place in 2026 and 2027. Please note that this schedule is tentative and subject to change once we get into design work.

While investigating the property earlier this year, NVCOG became aware of safety concerns at Coe Pond Dam. We engaged an engineer to produce a report, which confirmed that the dam was at risk of breach. Due to the immediate public safety concern, NVCOG and project partners are working to lower the water level of Coe Pond roughly 3-4 feet within the next several months. During the April canvassing, we had only just received the report and were unsure of next steps. This process has gone unusually quickly due to the imminent risk of a breach.

Question: Could you explain how the current owners have been uncooperative, considering the presentation makes it appear smooth, but the situation is actually very complex?

Answer: A very detailed timeline of the owners' activities and communications is available here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/02eb59d55f484f868584dc35f04a6ba2> This includes complaints filed against the owners with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), the owners' replies (or lack thereof), and FERC orders that have been issued. You're right – it is a complex situation! This process has been facilitated because the current owner has expressed support for the removal and granted NVCOG/STS access to the property to do the necessary site assessments, design, and planning.

Fish and Wildlife

Question: What will happen to beavers, bald eagles, and other species living in and around Coe Pond?

Answer: How wildlife will be affected depends on how Coe Pond will be altered, which is still yet to be determined. After lowering water levels by 3-4 feet this September/October, little change is anticipated to the birds and mammals in Coe Pond. After the removal of Kinneytown Dam, if the water levels are substantially lowered, say by half, then Coe Pond will decrease in area and water depth, and water dependent mammals like muskrats and beavers will need to rebuild burrows and lodges accordingly. If Coe Pond must be completely drained, then muskrat and beaver habitat will be confined to the small stream running through the site and some will be displaced. Bald eagles and ospreys are anticipated to benefit directly from the Kinneytown Dam Removal, regardless of what happens to Coe Pond, due to the infusion of forage fish to the reaches above Kinneytown Dam. Large rivers like the Naugatuck that are open to Long Island Sound tend to support more nesting bald eagles and osprey due to the presence of more abundant migratory fish populations moving upriver in spring, right when eagles and ospreys are looking to feed their chicks.

Question: When they built the fish ladder at Kinneytown Dam, how did they check on upstream and downstream passage of fish to determine that it wasn't working?

Answer: A video fish counter installed in the fishway collected data from 2000 to 2020. Data from the video logs was analyzed and revealed that it was not successfully passing fish. The fish ladder is for upstream passage only; the fish ladder was not designed for downstream fish passage.

Flooding

Question: Would opening the gates at Kinneytown Dam / Coe Pond contribute to flood prevention?

Answer: The Kinneytown Dam was not designed to be a flood control dam. Furthermore, the gates at Kinneytown (Unit #1 in Seymour) and Coe Pond (Unit #2 and Ansonia) are no longer operable; mechanical components have deteriorated beyond repair. These dams cannot be retrofitted into flood control dams.

Question: In regard to recent flooding—could we go to ConnDOT for additional funding, now that the railroad is affected?

Answer: The project team is investigating all potential funding sources, including CT DOT.

Development / Future of the Site

Question: Will the water flow destroy the way Coe Pond is structured now? Will it look different? Will it be man-made?

Answer: Coe Pond is a man-made reservoir, created for and by the canal and dam system. Prior to the canal and dam system, it was likely floodplain and wetland associated with the Naugatuck River. How Coe Pond is altered is still to be determined. It could be lowered substantially and remain a smaller and shallower pond, or it could become a wetland, or wet meadow with a stream running through it.

Question: What size will Coe Pond be after it's lowered 3-4 feet?

Answer: Coe Pond is approximately 38 acres; approximately 4 acres of shallow area will be exposed after it is lowered 3-4 feet.

Question: After removal, would it be possible for developers to build along the impoundment?

Answer: No, the land adjacent to the river channel upstream of the Kinneytown Dam will remain in the regulated floodplain with wetland soils subject to state and municipal regulation. The land is anticipated to be transferred to the municipality at the completion of the project with the expectation that it remains public property. The margins of the impoundment provide an opportunity to re-establish a functioning floodplain which would provide some temporary flood storage once the dam is removed.

Question: What will happen to all the trash that flows down the Naugatuck River and is stopped or corralled by the dam and the canal? Will it all flow straight into Long Island Sound?

Answer: Rivers are very good at transporting things – in fact, the transport of woody debris, nutrients, and sediment is one of their most important functions. Any trash that ends up in a river will also be carried downstream – but having a dam in place interrupts the transport of those good things while doing little to stop floating trash. The Kinneytown Dam is not designed to trap and remove all floating trash; much of it already passes over the spillway and into downstream reaches. Trash that is collected at the Kinneytown Dam during demolition and is accessible to construction equipment will be removed during demolition. Trash that has accumulated in the canal downstream of Coe Pond will be removed during demolition.

Question: Where will the concrete from the dam go?

Answer: Concrete will likely be demolished into workable fragments and hauled to a local concrete recycling facility or disposed at a permitted facility.

Question: Will Coe Pond be emptied out or backfilled and if so, with what? How might potential concerns (toxic sediments, etc.) affect these decisions?

Answer: We are too early in the process of hiring an engineer and gathering contamination data to give a definitive answer as to the final state of Coe Pond. However, due to pressing safety concerns, we are working with partners to lower the water level 3-4 feet in the immediate future. Physical and hydrologic limitations of the site, results of sediment sampling, and public input will all be considered as the long-term solution is designed.

Question: Are there any conceptual renderings about what Coe Pond will look like after?

Answer: Conceptual renderings are part of the scope for the engineering consultant to develop.

Question: Will Coe Pond be in public ownership or vulnerable to housing development during or after the project?

Answer: The Connecticut Brownfield Land Bank (the entity that will hold the property during the project) is a nonprofit, staffed by NVCOG, whose role will be to hold the property during construction to reduce liability. Since the inception of this project, the entire Kinneytown property (including Coe Pond) has always been envisioned as public space with public access to the Naugatuck River. Upon decommissioning, the property may be transferred to the respective municipalities. Future uses for the property will be investigated during the design process and will include outreach to the neighboring communities to ensure that local needs and wants are considered.

Question: Is there a way to improve fish passage while preserving Coe Pond?

Answer: NVCOG and Save the Sound are in the process of hiring an engineering firm to design the removal of Kinneytown Dam. That firm will consider physical and hydrologic limitations of the site, results of sediment sampling, and public input to determine what can be done with Coe Pond. We are too early in the process to give a definitive answer as to whether Coe Pond can be preserved.

Sediment Management

Question: How might sediment management impact air quality for nearby residents?

Answer: A plan to manage the sediment has yet to be determined. Active sediment management approaches, with mechanical or hydraulic excavation, do not create air quality impacts due to the high moisture content of the sediment.

Recreation

Question: What recreation will be possible if we cannot legally get to the Naugatuck River?

Answer: A goal of this project is to restore legal public access to the river – potentially from a multi-use trail or access way under the existing rail bridges at the east side of Kinneytown Dam spillway and Coe Pond Dam spillway.

Question: Would a trail/riverwalk connect to the existing Derby-Shelton riverwalk?

Answer: Although the trail has not yet been designed, it is envisioned as part of the [Naugatuck River Greenway](#) (NRG) trail to connect to the section to the North of Kinneytown Dam in Seymour, and to the longer contiguous section south of Kinneytown in Ansonia and Derby. When finished, the NRG is anticipated to run 44 miles from Torrington to Derby.

Question: Will there be access to Coe Pond via Hotchkiss Terrace or Kathy Lane?

Answer: Access needs and means during and after construction will be investigated during the dam removal design process that will be conducted over the next year.

Community Engagement

Question: It seems like many of the solutions have already been worked out for this project – what say does the community really have?

Answer: Some major components of this project will be dictated by circumstances that are beyond the project team's control. There will be decisions throughout the project, however, that public input can help guide, especially regarding the long-term planning for the property (potential amenities, access, security, etc.) after the facility is decommissioned and the dam is removed.

Question: How will you be advertising and publicizing the project and opportunities for engagement to ensure that others have a chance to get involved?

Answer: Our project team will continue to provide information through press releases, social media posts, and monthly email updates. We encourage the public to sign up and share these updates and invites with others. Regular community meetings are also being planned, to allow for frequent public engagement and input. From time to time, the project team may conduct additional canvassing or direct mailing in some areas adjacent to the project site.

Sewer Relocation

Question: What are the specifics of the plans to replace the sewer siphons?

Answer: This project is also in the early stages so there are no specifics yet. An engineering firm, CDM Smith, is looking at various alternatives to relocate the two siphons that are upstream of Kinneytown Dam and need to be moved prior to dam removal.

Public Safety

Question: Who is responsible for inspecting the dams (both)?

Answer: The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

Question: If trails are built near homes, what security measures will be put in place to protect homeowners from people trespassing or wandering onto their property?

Answer: Fencing will be considered to delineate public property and private property and prevent trespassing. The trails would presumably be patrolled as needed by municipal law enforcement, just as other sections of the trail and local parks are currently.