

Fish be dammed: Work delayed on removal of Flock Process Dam

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The Flock Process Dam along the Norwalk River, just south of the Merritt Parkway in Norwalk.

NORWALK — Fish will have to wait a little longer to travel upstream along the Norwalk River.

The long-planned removal of the Flock Process Dam from the river is now expected to begin in 2017.

The city had hoped to see the project begin this summer, but a property easement and the related legal paperwork will have to be hammered out before work can start.

"We're now looking at next summer and we're in the process of ironing out an easement with the upstream property owner," said Alexis Cherichetti, Norwalk's senior environmental officer. "When the dam is breached, it will start to mobilize sediment within the channel. We're capturing that sediment and then the plan was to deposit it in this backwater, to fill that in with the mobilized sediment and make it a low meadow."

The plan calls for removing approximately 1,200 cubic yards of sediment from the river and relocating it to the easement area immediately to the north, she said.

The area where the sediment would be deposited lies on property occupied by the MerrittView office building at 383 Main Ave. The property is owned by [Empire State Realty Trust MerrittView](#), LLC.

The building owner could not be reached immediately for comment.

Cherichetti said Empire State Realty is willing to grant the easement. She said the city's law department has provided the property owner a draft easement for review. Still, work will not begin until 2017.

"We were late in working out the easement," Cherichetti said. "There's just a lot of logistics to work out."

The 22-foot dam was built in the 1850s to generate power. "Flock" was the term for a tuft of wool or cotton fiber used to stuff mattresses, according to the [Norwalk River Watershed Association](#), which supports its removal.

The state [Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#) considers the dam to be an impediment to the runs of migratory fish along the river.

The dam removal is in accordance with the [Norwalk River Watershed Action Plan](#) (1998). Habitat restoration is behind the removal of the Flock Process, Cannandale and Merwin Meadows dams. All three dams are "run-of-river" dams, which do not offer any flood control or protection in the watershed." Likewise, all three dams are abandoned and "no longer serve industry or agriculture," according to the DEEP.

State officials had predicted that sediment movement and relocation would complicate the dam

removal project.

“There’s a lot of sediment that has to be taken care of,” **Arthur P. Christian**, supervising civil engineer with the DEEP, said last year. “So it’s a little bit of staging, but we feel real comfortable with the design.”

The city of Norwalk applied for the permits to remove the Flock Process Dam.

The DEEP issued its water quality certificate and the **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers** issued an authorization to proceed under the then-current Connecticut general permit, according to the Army Corps of Engineers Regulatory/**Permitting Office**.

But that was some time ago and a new permit will have to be issued, according to the office.

“The town hasn’t started the work and since the Corps General Permit has expired, and they haven’t started the work or even have a contractor on board to start the work, they cannot proceed,” said **Timothy Dugan**, spokesman for the Army Corps’ New England Region. “Their application will have to be reviewed under the new general permit when it comes out and they will be issued a new permit.”

Two years ago, officials estimated the dam removal cost at \$645,000. Cherichetti anticipates that will rise.

In October 2013, Norwalk’s legislative delegation in Washington, D.C., announced that the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service had awarded Norwalk a \$970,000 grant to remove the Flock Process Dam from the Norwalk River.

Removal of the dam, according to the delegation, will eliminate dam failure risk, restore native species populations and build resilience to future flooding, according to U.S. Rep. **Jim Himes**, D-4, and U.S. Sens. **Richard M. Blumenthal** and **Chris Murphy**, also **Democrats**.

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