RIVERKEEPER
NY's clean water advocate

Removing dams, restoring streams

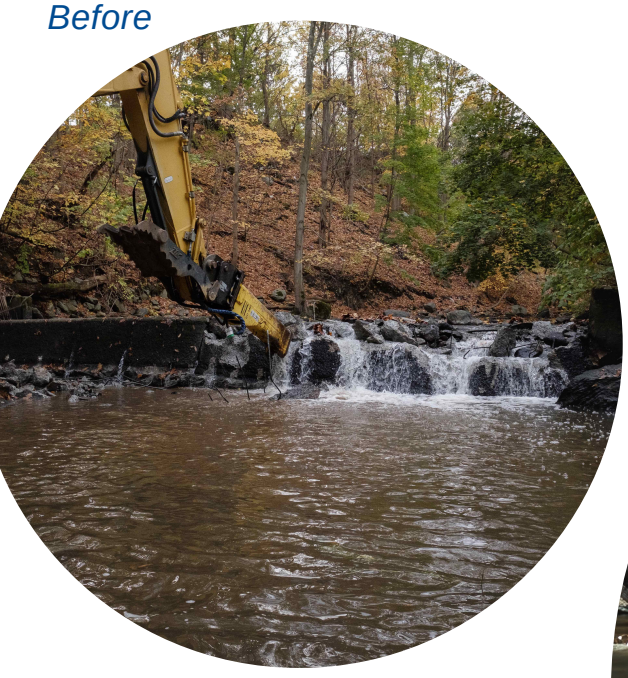
A Riverkeeper campaign

In the Hudson Valley, a great wildlife migration takes place right in front of us – just under the surface: River herring, striped bass, American shad, Atlantic sturgeon and other fish enter the Hudson every year to renew their populations. Tiny eels drift in, 1,800 miles from their birthplace, the Sargasso Sea, to mature in the fresh water of Hudson Valley streams.

But here's the sad truth: Almost every population is in decline. Some species are vanishing. During the past two centuries, we harvested too many fish, destroyed too much habitat, dumped too much poison, and dammed too many streams.

We now have an enormous opportunity to help some of these fish rebound.

Before



Quassaick Creek is being transformed.

Dams at this location had blocked herring and eels from moving upstream for more than 300 years.

Projects like this can restore life to streams and enhance community resilience to flooding.

By removing dams, we can reopen vital spawning grounds, revive the web of life, and allow nature to heal and flourish.

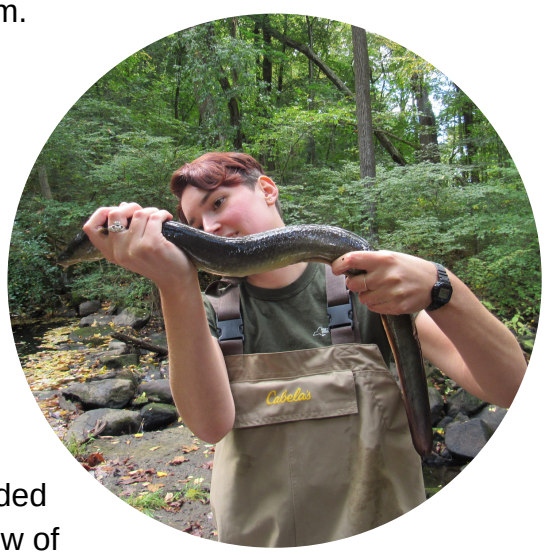
After

Free-flowing creeks are fountains of life.

Several species of fish use the Hudson River and its tributaries as migratory pathways to move between forage, nursery and spawning habitat. Tucked away in the protected reaches of rivers and tributaries, juvenile river herring, shad, striped bass, shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic sturgeon and eels are allowed to mature with less danger than they would encounter in the ocean.

What's the dam problem?

More than 2,000 dams, most of them obsolete and many hidden from view, fragment the rivers and streams of the Hudson Valley. They stifle the life in a stream. They block the flow of fish, aquatic life, sediments and nutrients. Learn about the benefits of removing them.



For the fish: Dams prevent certain fish from using migratory pathways to forage, grow and reproduce. Consequently, river herring, eels, shad and sturgeon, once highly abundant, are now in serious decline.

At one time, American eel were the most dominant species of every creek in the Hudson Valley. Now, they are highly imperiled and in long term decline.

For the community: Dams cause poor water quality. The impounded water behind a dam traps nutrients and heat. This can create a stew of harmful algal blooms. It can cause greenhouse gas emissions.

Dams also worsen flooding hazards. In an era of climate change, we need to give water space to flow freely and to drain naturally from the landscape. During weather extremes – drought, heat waves and heavy downpours – we need our rivers to be as healthy and resilient as they can be. Free flowing creeks are the answer.

What's the process for removing a dam?

Riverkeeper is working alongside dam owners and communities to formulate agreements for dam removal. We can help identify support and funding for these projects.

Have a dam in your area? Want more info?
Contact us!

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