

US Fish & Wildlife Service National Fish Passage Program Funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (the Act) includes a critical injection of funding to programs that support dam removals. Passage of the Act also demonstrates extraordinary support by Congress and hard work by a collaboration of dam safety groups, river conservation organizations, the hydropower industry, and civil engineers to include dam removal in the Act. These organizations collaborated to find balanced solutions for dam rehabilitation, dam removal, and retrofit of dams for hydropower and worked directly with champions in Congress to secure this funding.

Dam removal, with consent of the owner, can be a cost-effective approach to managing a significant portion of our nation's aging dam infrastructure. Dam removals can improve public safety, restore the natural functions of rivers, help extirpated and endangered fish species, create jobs, protect important environmental and cultural resources, and increase the climate resilience of U.S. rivers.

If used as envisioned, this funding will improve the environmental, safety, and economic benefits of healthy rivers across the country through dam removal, while advancing dam safety and the benefits of hydropower. American Rivers and others worked to secure \$200 million for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for dam removal through the National Fish Passage Program. This money is intended to be used for all aspects of dam removal projects, including grants for technical assistance.

What's Funded?

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funded the USFWS to support restoring fish passage by removing in-stream barriers (i.e., dams) and providing technical assistance under the National Fish Passage Program:

National Fish Passage Program (NFPP): \$200 million over 5 years

The National Fish Passage Program works with communities to restore rivers and conserve aquatic resources by removing barriers. This funding provides for:

- Removing in-stream barriers (dams)
- Technical assistance
- Additional project steps including, but not limited to: engineering, scientific assessment, economic analysis, construction, project management, technical assistance, acquisition, liability insurance, monitoring, regulatory compliance, updating flood hazard mapping as needed for project implementation, project administration, infrastructure protection, and sediment management

These funds in the infrastructure bill have been provided to USFWS specifically for the removal of dams (in-stream barriers). These funds are not to be used for the removal, breach, or otherwise alter the operations of a federal hydropower dam.

How does NFPP work?

You must work with a Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office Biologist to be considered for funding. To begin this process, please contact your [Regional Fish Passage Coordinator](#) or your local Fish and Wildlife Conservation Office. Service Biologists will discuss the project with you and help ensure it is a good fit for the National Fish Passage Program. It is recommended that you do this early in the process so that they can help guide the creation of your proposal.

Proposals are accepted year-round; however, the funding cycle for Fish Passage projects begins each year in the Fall with compilation of the projects being proposed for the following year's funding. The projects are reviewed

and prioritized in the Winter. Generally, funding for selected projects becomes available the following Spring but the timing is dependent upon federal budget allocation. Funding is administered through the Regional and local [Fish and Wildlife Conservation Offices](#). The USFWS also has alternate funding approaches that do not conform to this cycle – work with your Regional Fish Passage Coordinator to understand regional deadlines and approaches for project submission.

Who is eligible?

- Institutions of higher education, non-profits, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, state or local governments, Indian Tribes, and individuals

Cost-Share:

- 1:1 match requirement on a regional basis that USFWS must demonstrate but is not explicitly required of individual projects. Match funds may be used as a scoring criterion.

A Dam Removal Project is Defined as:

A dam removal project means a project to permanently remove the full vertical extent of a dam structure to a minimum horizontal width needed to protect public safety, restore natural river function, and reconnect aquatic species passage, unless site conditions prevent that removal width. Dam removals provide social, economic, and environmental benefits:

- Reconnects important migratory corridors for fish and other aquatic species
- Tribal rights to water, fishing, and cultural sites
- Improved climate resilience of rivers for all the species they support
- Safety for communities
- Recreational opportunities
- Job creation
- Improved fishery and wildlife conditions
- Reduce flood risk
- Improve water quality

How can funding be directed to dam removal projects?

Actions USFWS can take:

- Prioritize dam removal projects to achieve permanent fish passage
- Direct technical assistance funding to support implementation of active dam removal projects and the cultivation of future projects

Actions States, Municipalities and River Conservationists can take:

- Identify priority dam removal projects that restore and conserve our nation's aquatic resources
- Establish relationships with a USFWS Regional Fish Passage Coordinator
- Share information about this funding program with dam owners, particularly those with dams in need of updates and repairs
- Collaborate to address projects at a watershed or reach scale
- Provide technical and administrative support to state fishery and dam safety staff, as well as municipal environmental managers and public works staff

More Information

USFWS [National Fish Passage Program](#); NOAA Community-Based Habitat Restoration; USFS Dam Removal; USACE Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program; FEMA High Hazard Potential Dams; NRCS Watershed Rehabilitation Program; DOT National Culvert Replacement; Bureau of Reclamation Western Water Infrastructure; EPA Geographic Programs