

NOAA Community-Based Restoration Funding in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs 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 \$400 million for the NOAA Community-Based Restoration Program. This money is intended to be used for all aspects of dam removal projects, including grants for technical assistance. There is also a 15% set-aside for Tribes and Tribal partnerships.

What's Funded?

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funded NOAA to support restoring fish passage by removing in-stream barriers (i.e., dams) pursuant to Section 117 of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Reauthorization Act, which directs the agency to establish a community-based fishery and coastal habitat restoration program:

Community Based Restoration (CRP) Grant Program: \$400 million over 5 years

The Community-Based Restoration Program supports restoration projects that use a habitat-based approach to rebuild productive and sustainable fisheries, contribute to the recovery and conservation of protected resources, promote healthy ecosystems, and yield community and economic benefits. This funding provides for:

- Removing in-stream barriers (dams)
- Technical assistance
- 15% set-aside for Tribes and Tribal partnerships
- 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 NOAA specifically for the removal of dams (in-stream barriers). This funding is intended to be used to support all aspects of dam removal projects, including engineering, scientific assessment, project planning and management, technical assistance and more. These funds are not to be used for the removal, breach, or otherwise alter the operations of a federal hydropower dam.

How does the CRP work?

NOAA traditionally holds competitive grant cycles and distributed Community-Based Restoration funding through multi-year cooperative agreements.

Who is eligible?

- Applicants: Institution of higher education, non-profit, commercial (for profit) organizations, U.S. territories, state or local governments, and Indian Tribes

Cost-Share:

- None required, but having match funds will make proposals score higher

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 that can include:

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

How can funding be directed to dam removal projects?

Actions NOAA 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 recover and sustain fisheries--particularly those species managed by NOAA Fisheries, or those listed as endangered or threatened under the Endangered Species Act
- 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 and Additional Restoration and Resilience Funding through IJJA:

NOAA [Community-Based Habitat Restoration](#); USFWS National Fish Passage Program; 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