

US Army Corps of Engineers Dam Removal 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 \$115 million for dam removal through the Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program.

What's Funded?

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funded the USACE to support dam safety and ecosystem restoration by removing dams under the Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program:

Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program (AERP): \$115 million for dam removal to remain available until expended

The Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration Program is a competitive grant program that provides funding for restoring aquatic ecosystems for fish and wildlife. The funds provided in the Act are specifically for the removal of dams. 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 USACE specifically for dam removal projects. These funds are not to be used for the removal, breach, or otherwise alter the operations of a federal hydropower dam.

How does AERP work?

Normally, the process for Section 206 Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration projects begins after a non-federal sponsor requests Corps of Engineers assistance under the program. When funding is available, the Corps of Engineers prepares a feasibility study, beginning with an estimate of the overall scope and cost of the study and a determination of whether the project is in the federal interest. This process may differ with Infrastructure funds because a non-federal cost share is not

required. Contact your [local USACE district](#) to determine how to access Infrastructure funds for a dam removal project .

Who is eligible?

- Non-federal entities can request Corps assistance through AERP and enter into a cooperative agreement. Non-profits can be a non-federal entity if there is no future requirements for Operation and Maintenance, Repair, Replacement, and Rehabilitation. However, the elimination of non-federal cost share may change the need for a non-federal sponsor.

Cost-Share:

- No cost share is required for USACE AERP dam removal funds

Timeline:

- USACE typically accepts proposed projects on a rolling basis

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:

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

How can funding be directed to dam removal projects?

Actions USACE can take:

- Prioritize dam removal projects to achieve permanent aquatic species restoration
- Direct technical assistance funding to support implementation of active dam removal 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 USACE Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration staff
- 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 IIJA:

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