

Fish Passage



Fisheries
& Habitat
Conservation

Early in the history of the United States, thousands of culverts, dikes, water diversions, dams and other artificial barriers were constructed to impound or redirect water for irrigation, flood control, electricity, water supply, and transportation. All of these changed the natural features of countless waterways, blocking the natural migration of fish to historic habitat used for reproduction and growth.



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Today, an estimated 2.5 million artificial barriers, including dams greater than six feet in height, exist throughout the country. Many no longer serve their original purpose and were abandoned years ago.

Launched by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1999, the Fish Passage program is a voluntary, non-regulatory effort that provides financial and technical assistance to remove or bypass man-made barriers that are impeding the movement of fish and contributing to their decline. Fish Passage has become one of the Service's most popular initiatives and is a model for cooperative conservation-based aquatic habitat restoration efforts. The program embraces partners from every level of government and a wide range of private and civic conservation groups, most of which add significant matching funds that help stretch taxpayer dollars, and allows citizens at a number of different levels to become directly involved in the kind of restoration work that can have important benefits.

Fish access, natural flows and temperature have been restored on 5,899 miles and 83,718 acres of habitat for trout, herring, striped bass, shad, sturgeon, salmon, minnows and darters. Anglers and commercial and subsistence fishers benefit from larger fish populations, which are distributed across more available habitat. Fish-eating birds such as eagles, osprey and kingfishers have more forage. Even bears, otters and mink benefit from improved fish populations.

The range of projects completed with assistance from the Fish Passage program includes large-scale projects such as the removal of Edwards Dam on Maine's Kennebec River and the breaching of the Embrey Dam on the Rappahannock River in Virginia, to the repair or removal of culverts and other water diversions.

To support the barrier removal process, the Service utilizes the Fish Passage Decision Support System, a web-based modeling tool that applies scientific data to the process of ranking restoration opportunities. Altogether, the Service has identified 284 barriers for removal, at a cost of \$22 million. The Service will continue to work closely with its many partners to complete those projects as funding becomes available.



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For more information about Fish Passage Program, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Fisheries and Habitat Conservation at 202/208-6394 or visit us on the Internet at <http://fisheries.fws.gov/>.

**U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
800/344-WILD
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