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“Dam Cam” to Capture Removal of New Hampshire’s Merrimack Village Dam

For more than 270 years, the Merrimack Village Dam helped power saw mills, gristmills, a shoe factory and provided water for a chemical factory. No longer powering industry and scheduled for demolition, the dam has one last role to play — that of movie star.

Beginning this week, NOAA, in partnership with the Conservation Law Foundation, will capture live on camera the removal of the dam, opening up 14 miles of the Souhegan River from Milford to Merrimack, N.H., providing extensive habitat for river herring, Atlantic salmon, American shad and American eel.

“Merrimack residents and people around the world can go online and watch the river as it transforms back to its natural free-flowing state,” said Eric Hutchins of the NOAA Restoration Center. “From your laptop at home, you’ll see years of planning and preparations come to life, and watch the river repair itself.”

With NOAA’s first-ever “dam cam,” viewers will see backhoes and bulldozers take down the dam’s concrete wall and restore the flow of the Souhegan River, a major tributary to the Merrimack River. Photos of the removal will be captured every 10 minutes, with a time-lapse film starting this week through August 30. After the dam removal is complete, the camera will continue to capture footage for five months as the river continues to restore itself. The feed can be found at <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/>.

NOAA has contributed more than \$260,000 to the dam removal project over several years. The removal of Merrimack Village Dam is one of NOAA’s largest projects under its Open Rivers Initiative, a national effort to restore the historic river habitat of migratory fish and other species that travel between ocean-coastal and upstream freshwater areas. Projects include removing derelict dams, culverts and other river barriers. Through the Open Rivers Initiative, NOAA outlines specific consensus steps developed by expert scientists, engineers, biologists and members of the local public, working together.

The Merrimack Village Dam was one of a series of dams built on the Souhegan River in the 1730s to power industry. It now presents a public safety hazard and a liability for its owner.

The dam’s removal will also open an excellent stretch of class II whitewater for canoeing and kayaking enthusiasts.

NOAA understands and predicts changes in the Earth’s environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and conserves and manages our coastal and marine resources. Visit <http://www.noaa.gov>.