

Do you support the removal of the Columbia dam and the return of the Paulins Kill to a free-flowing river?

Reasons to Remove the Columbia Dam

The license for the small hydroelectric plant at the Columbia dam must be renewed in 2025. Federal regulations require a fish ladder to be installed for the license to be renewed. Because installing a fish ladder is prohibitively expensive, the owner of the hydroelectric plant would not renew his license in 2025. The dam will then become the responsibility of the NJDEP, which owns the site. The NJDEP and the taxpayers of New Jersey would be responsible for maintaining and taking down the dam-- an estimated \$4 million cost.

The Nature Conservancy's plan is to take down the dam in 2017, 8 years before it would become the responsibility of the state, and create a park that would provide access to the Paulins Kill. The cost of taking down the dam and creating the park would be borne by federal grants and private donations.

In addition to saving the taxpayers of New Jersey a significant amount of money The Nature Conservancy asserts that dam removal will provide recreation such as new hiking opportunities and connectivity for kayakers to the Delaware River. Replacing Columbia Lake, which is filling with sediment, with a natural stream will lower water temperatures downstream and improve water quality in the Delaware River into which the Paulins Kills flows.

Fish species like American shad and river herring will be able to return to their native spawning grounds. Wildlife species that now use the lake will have ample nearby habitat to thrive.

Hydropower lost will be made up for by solar panels at Pequest Hatchery that will generate 47% more electricity.

Reasons to Keep the Columbia Dam

The Columbia Dam creates a lovely setting providing fish and bird habitat and all species of flora and fauna. It is a part of Knowlton's history and provides an excellent fishing spot used by New Jersey residents for relaxation and sport. The lake created by the dam creates tourism that businesses located in Knowlton depend upon and it is an important feeding area for migratory birds.

The Dam fulfills an important safety function by providing water for the Knowlton Fire Department during emergencies. Removing this emergency source could raise homeowner insurance rates. While dam removal has been justified for public safety purposes, this is not a significant factor in this case, because the DEP's Bureau of Dam Safety gives the dam a low risk rating.

The costs for dam removal are estimated to be much higher than the costs to install a fish ladder, which is the simpler solution that should be implemented. A fish ladder could allow the hydroplant to continue operation and allow the preservation of the Dam, with all its public benefits, and enable fish to swim upstream.

With the climate changing, any energy source that lessens the use of fossil fuels should be kept. This is more environmentally sound for the planet than a few fish who may or may not come up the Paulins kill.

