

Orland Dam Committee Report

The Orland Dam Committee has continued to meet about once a month for the past year (2014/15). The initial Feasibility Study was submitted to the town in 2013/14 and is posted on the town web page at (<http://www.orlandme.org/Orland%20Dam.html>). This study uncovered a number of questions that need further investigation. It should be pointed out that no decision on the future of the dam has been made and that we have been looking at five alternatives:

- No Action – just keep the dam as it is
- Dam and Fishway Rehabilitation
- Dam and Fishway Modification (improvement)
- Dam Removal
- A Nature Like Fishway

These five alternatives are discussed and analyzed in the Feasibility Study and a final decision on which one the Town decides to follow will be made by a vote at the town meeting or a referendum probably in June of 2016. Meanwhile, there are several questions that still remain and will be investigated further this summer. Funding for these further studies is being provided 100% by NOAA through the Nature Conservancy.

Mercury - A court ordered study of Holtra Chemical Company's contamination of the Penobscot River shows a very high concentration of mercury in the area below the Orland dam and Verona Island area. The significance of this contamination needs to be determined before any action on the future of the dam is determined.

The recent closing of the Verso Paper mill will be impacting the water flow in the Orland River as the mill previously pumped about 10 million gallons/day from Alamoosook dam and that reduced the flow in the Orland River. The increased water flow should improve the water quality in the river but the future of the Alamoosook and Toddy dams as well as future water use by the new owners of the mill are unknown at this time.

We need to determine with more precision the hydrography of the river if the dam were to be removed and what the river would look like without the dam.

We need to determine what type of scouring or erosion would occur to the bridges and the effect on the culverts on the Upper Falls Road if the river would become tidal.

We need to determine what could be done to provide adequate water supply for fire suppression if the dam was removed.

It is our plan to provide information including future costs, funding sources and impacts for each of the alternatives so you the citizens of Orland can make an informed decision on the future of the dam and its impact on the town.

John Barlow, Chair
Orland Dam Committee