



# Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

## Press Release

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## Governor Pat Quinn, partners announce completion of Hofmann Dam removal on Des Plaines River

In 1827, brothers David and Bernardus Laughton constructed a dam in the Des Plaines River to help their saw mill business, and through the years, the dam was rebuilt, along with two others. However, these dams caused unintended consequences: stormwater runoff increased neighborhood flooding, fish were negatively impacted and recreators faced risks from undercurrents.

Fast forward 185 years, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has removed these three dams in what is present-day Riverside to improve water quality, allow for the migration of fish and prevent flooding. To commemorate the completion of the dams' removal, Governor Pat Quinn and other partners announced the Illinois Dam Removal Initiative to remove or modify 16 dams using \$10 million over the next two years.

"Free-flowing rivers benefit all of Illinois," Governor Quinn said. "Removing these dams will improve waterways across our state, making them safer for kayakers and paddlers who use them for exercise and recreation, and for anglers who enjoy fishing in these rivers. This dam removal initiative will improve conservation, water quality and outdoor recreation in Illinois."

The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) is working on a similar project with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, the Chicago Park District and other non-governmental organizations to remove the North Branch Dam at River Park.

"The dam removal initiative is another effort that will help allow plants and animals to flourish as well as eliminate undercurrents that are a hazard to paddlers and fishing enthusiasts," said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore. "The MWRD appreciates the hard work of the Governor's office, Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, the Friends of the Chicago River and all of the other partners who are helping to make Illinois waterways healthier than they ever were."

"Removing dams improves water quality, aquatic habitat and recreational safety," said IDNR Director Marc Miller. "It also addresses the issue of dealing with crumbling and aging infrastructure, which would be much more expensive to repair or replace. These dams no longer serve their original purpose



*Governor Pat Quinn announced the Illinois Dam Removal Initiative at the site of the former Hofmann Dam in Riverside on Oct. 26.*

and removal or modification will save the state and local communities' money in the future."

The areas extending upstream from Hofmann Dam will see the most direct physical benefit from the improvements. The upstream reach and river channel have been converted from a slow-moving, deeper pool habitat to a free-flowing stream habitat. The most important benefits include enhanced drainage system at nearby Swan Pond Park to prevent entrapment of fish, increased fish passage, restoration of the natural flow of the river and improved public safety.

More than 15 miles of the Des Plaines River upstream of the previously existing dam has been opened to all fish and other aquatic species and a significant increase in biodiversity will be gained.

The removal of the three Des Plaines River dams is funded through the Governor's Illinois Jobs Now! capital construction program, the largest in Illinois history, which supports an estimated 439,000 construction jobs. The program, which aims to modernize Illinois' infrastructure, began in 2009.

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*Established in 1889, the MWRD ([www.mwrdd.org](http://www.mwrdd.org)) is an award-winning, special purpose government agency responsible for wastewater treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois. **Our water environment, take it personally.***