Social Issues of Dam Removal

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What to Expect

- Challenges of the social issues of dam removal.

- Role of social issues in dam removal: climate change & hydropower production: VNRC perspective
Ecological Issues
Often triggers the consideration of the removal option

Economic Issues
Usually the pivotal decision factor

Social Issues

Regulatory Issues
Can be challenging to negotiate

Engineering Issues
“It can be done” but not (yet) standardized
Common Issues

Social Perspectives on Dam Removal by Helen Sarakinos River Alliance of Wisconsin and Sara E. Johnson Principal, G&G Consulting
Underestimating social issues affects all phases of a project as well as future projects (in same community & beyond)
When people oppose the removal, it may not be about the decision itself, but how the decision was made.
Include in Social Issues

- Public safety
- Public use
- Alternatives
Include in Social Issues

- Flooding concerns
- Local economics
- Education
Johns River Dam  Whitefield, NH

Actual impoundment  

Photo Rendering  (by Stephanie Lindloff)
Why do more than what the law requires?

Because you want the dam to come out.
Handling Risk & Uncertainty
Understanding Social Concerns

**Information-based**
Can be addressed through information gathering and education.

**Value-based**
May not be possible to reconcile - dam removal is a fundamental change to the site.

These concerns are intertwined. Public involvement helps tease them apart.
- Forests
- Sustainable Communities
- Energy
- Water
Vermont

• 1200 dams inventoried

• 85-ish generating electricity

• Hundreds that will never produce hydroelectric power
Climate Change “Purists”

VNRC
Vermont Natural Resources Council

River “Purists”
Environmentalists
vs.
Environmentalists
Priorities for Removal

- Not serving original purpose
- Aquatic resource impacts
- Safety hazard