



# Wyomissing Creek Dam Removal

## Reading, Pennsylvania

### Highlight:

### Wyomissing Creek

Reading, Pennsylvania sits more than 100 miles from the coast. However, it is connected to Delaware Bay by a 30-mile waterway, Wyomissing Creek. In the 1920s, two small dams were erected along the creek to create a shallow reflecting pond on the Reading Public Museum property in Reading, Pennsylvania. Although it was once aesthetically pleasing, the pond created ecological problems and became a maintenance nuisance. The Reading Public Museum decided to remove the dams and return Wyomissing Creek to a natural state. NOAA's Community-Based Restoration program, American Rivers, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation joined together with the Reading Museum to fund the dam removal project in 2004.

The project involved a multi-disciplinary approach to restore natural riverine functions and habitats along a reach of the creek that passed through museum property. The project doubled as an attempt to revitalize a public area that was once an historical focal point for Reading Public Museum and the City of Reading.

Wyomissing Creek historically supported populations of anadromous fish which migrated to areas near Reading in search of spawning habitat. The two low-head dams that created the reflecting pond prevented diadromous and resident fish passage along Wyomissing Creek for nearly 80 years. Removal of the dams opened up approximately 1800 linear feet of stream reach (400 linear feet which was impounded).



Restoration enhanced a natural park area for environmental education which supported the museum's curriculum and charter. Other activities on the museum's property included:

- enhancing 6.3 acres of riparian forest buffer
- restoring the stream ecosystem along with diversity and abundance of native species within the proposed site
- eliminating a public safety hazard
- eliminating nuisance waterfowl populations by draining impoundments
- improving park infrastructure including the incorporation of signage and other public education curricula
- developing an attractive public natural area for use by museum visitors and general public (including anglers and outdoor recreational enthusiasts)

The contractor in charge of the project was able not only to remove the dams, but also reduced the

## GOAL

**Restore anadromous fish runs for wild brown trout, blueback herring, and American shad; provide a natural and cultural resource for the citizens of Reading, PA**

## CONTACT

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**National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration**

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unnaturally straight lines of the creek through the park. Heavy equipment reshaped the creek into a natural, sinuous waterway and added rock material to create riffles and natural pools. Since the dam removal, the contractor completed further instream enhancements along the creek. In addition, the Reading Public Museum's Master Gardeners created a riparian buffer zone along the stream channel.

Pre- and post-dam removal monitoring of water quality, habitat quality, and biotic communities will evaluate the project's success. This monitoring will also provide much-needed data about the impacts of dam removal on stream ecosystem restoration.



Stream enhancements in progress



Dam removal during deconstruction



## PROJECT PARTNERS:

- American Rivers
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
- Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
- Reading Public Museum
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
- US Fish and Wildlife Service