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Options and Opportunities for Michigan's Small Dams *Huron Pines Partners with Land Owners to Protect Aquatic Resources*

Small dams are found on private and public lands throughout Michigan. Though some still serve a useful purpose, many were installed decades ago and may be in disrepair and at risk of failing. Heavy rains or extreme weather, can lead to complete blow out of a dam causing distress for landowners and potentially harming aquatic wildlife. A blown dam can send a large amount of water sediment and muck downstream rapidly. This can bury important gravel habitat on the streambank, which is used by spawning fish and is a home for the aquatic insects that form the base of the food chain.

Dams alter stream flow, disrupt movement of sediment through the river system and generally prevent fish from passing upstream, which can block them from suitable spawning habitat. Removing obsolete dams can eliminate a liability for landowners and enhance our rivers and streams for people and wildlife.

According to Josh Leisen, Watershed Project Manager for Huron Pines, "If a dam is no longer serving a useful purpose, the best option for the river and for landowners is usually to remove the dam. Every dam is a unique scenario. In some cases, it may be appropriate to renovate or repair a small dam structure, or even to take no action. Huron Pines provides the expertise to meet one-on-one with property owners to talk about their options regarding small dams. We can provide information about the technical aspects of dam removal, the permitting process, funding opportunities and more."

Huron Pines, a nonprofit organization serving Northeast Michigan, has managed several successful small dam removals and offers information to landowners about options for managing or removing small dams. "Huron Pines is managing two dam removal projects in 2019, including a site on the Middle Branch Cedar River in Clare County and another small dam on the East Branch Pine River in Alcona County," said Leisen. "Both are small dams on private property that recently failed, and the landowners reached out to Huron Pines for assistance to remove them."

Robert Gingery, the landowner at the Middle Branch Cedar River Dam site, is happy to have assistance in removing the dam on his property. Gingery explained, "After visiting with Michigan DEQ staff after my dam failed in a high-water event in 2016, we reached out to Huron Pines for assistance. After more than a year of planning, we now have engineering designs, project permits and sufficient funding to remove the dam this summer. We would not be at this stage of the process without the effective coordination of Huron Pines."

Anyone interested in consultation or assistance or learning more about small dam removal is encouraged to contact Josh Leisen at josh@huronpines.org or (989) 448-2293 x16 for information and/or to schedule a free visit to discuss dam management options.



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Huron Pines is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and an equal opportunity provider with a mission of protecting the Great Lakes by conserving the forests, lakes and streams of Northeast Michigan. Huron Pines believes that through active leadership and coordination of conservation projects we can support stewardship of the water, wildlife and community in the places we live and love. www.huronpines.org

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Small dam on the East Branch Pine River, Alcona County. Planned for 2019 removal.



Small dam on Middle Branch Cedar River, Clare County. Planned for 2019 removal.



Miller Creek Dam (Presque Isle County). Dam removal and road crossing installation completed in 2011.