

Removal of DuPont Experimental Station Dam to Open Brandywine River to Migrating Fish for First Time in Nearly 300 Years

Project led by Brandywine River Restoration Trust will reconnect 11-mile stretch for American shad and other species

WILMINGTON , DE, UNITED STATES, August 13, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Brandywine River Restoration Trust (BRRT) has begun removing a portion of the DuPont Experimental Station Dam, also known as Dam 6, advancing a multi year effort to restore fish passage past 11 obsolete dams on the Brandywine River.

“

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Shad, like salmon, are anadromous, born in fresh water, living at sea and returning to their natal river to spawn. After the first dam came down in 2019, the University of Delaware Sea Grant studies documented American shad spawning the next year in the newly opened reaches. .

“Large schools of shad used to swim up the Brandywine every year,” said Professor Ed Hale of UD-Sea Grant. “We’re on our way to welcoming them back through reconnecting fragmented habitat corridors”

The deconstruction of Dam 6 is part of a nationwide trend in which 108 dams were removed in 2024, the most ever in a single year . A study conducted by The Nature Conservancy identified the Brandywine River as one of the “six highest priority tributaries” of the Delaware River for American Shad restoration efforts. Benefits of dam removal include improved water quality, reduced flood risk and increased biodiversity.

Built in 1839 by E.I. du Pont de Nemours to power a dust mill, two rolling mills, a graining mill and a glazing mill, Dam 6 is owned by the City of Wilmington and DuPont. Though long defunct, the structure contributes to periodic flooding at DuPont’s Experimental Station after heavy rains in the watershed.

“Removing unused or deteriorating dams restores the natural, original flow to rivers and streams,” said DNREC Secretary Greg Patterson. “With the removal of Dam 6 on the Brandywine,

DNREC scientists expect less local flooding, increased habitat for native fish and aquatic species, and improved water quality – all good things.”

BRRT will honor the history of the dam by educating the public on the dam's construction and the historic industrial development of the Brandywine, with interpretive panels, guided tours, booklet, website and presentations for the public. “These programs will help Delawareans understand the remarkable history of the Brandywine dams and the mills they powered.” says Jim Shanahan, Executive Director of BRRT. One-third of the dam will be preserved so the public can see what has been underwater for almost 200 years.

Major support for the removal of the dam comes from the State of Delaware, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, DuPont Specialty Products and Longwood Foundation. Design and engineering services are being provided by Kleinschmidt Group. Environmental Quality Resources is performing the demolition.

- (1) https://brrt.org/wp-content/uploads/Brandywine_Report_2024.pdf
- (2) <https://www.americanrivers.org/media-item/american-rivers-report-2024-tied-for-most-ever-dams-removed-in-us-underscoring-momentum-for-river-restoration/>
- (3) <https://brrt.org/wp-content/uploads/study-Nature-Conservancy.pdf>
- (4) <https://brrt.org/wp-content/uploads/study-CHAD.pdf> (pg173)

Jim Shanahan
Brandywine River Restoration Trust
jim@brrt.org

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Deconstruction of DuPont Dam

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