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BRANDYWINE RIVER RESTORATION TRUST

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Deconstruction 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, Del. (August 6, 2025) - The Brandywine River Restoration Trust (BRRT) has begun removing a portion of the DuPont Experimental Station Dam, also known as Dam 6 and Lower Hagley Yard Mill Dam, advancing a multi-year effort to restore fish passage past 11 obsolete dams on the Brandywine River.

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 very next year in the newly opened reaches¹. “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.² 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.³ 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.⁴ Though long

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> (pg 47-55)

⁴ <https://brrt.org/wp-content/uploads/study-CHAD.pdf> (pg173)

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 deconstruction.

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About Brandywine River Restoration Trust

Founded in 2017, Brandywine River Restoration Trust, is a consortium of local, regional and national conservation minded organizations that are working together to restore the Brandywine and enable the annual migration of anadromous fish including American Shad. For more information visit www.brrt.org

About National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) works with partners to foster sustainable and impactful conservation solutions so that people and nature thrive together. Since its founding, NFWF has funded more than 23,300 projects that have generated a total conservation impact of more than \$11.3 billion. Learn more at nfwf.org.

About Kleinschmidt Group

For nearly 60 years, Kleinschmidt has provided engineering, regulatory, and environmental consulting services to energy companies and government agencies across North America for complex renewable energy, water, and environmental projects. For more information visit www.kleinschmidtgroup.com

About Environmental Quality Resources

Founded in 1991, the mission of EQR is to deliver well-built, cost-effective solutions in stream restoration, wetlands, living shorelines, stormwater management, native plant landscaping, invasive species management, and more. For more information visit www.eqrllc.com.
