



Connecticut Fund  
for the Environment  

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Save the Sound®

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## **16 Miles of Upper Quinnipiac River Flow Free! Third Barrier Removed**

*Exposed inactive water line removed, improving safety for paddlers and improving fish passage on the Quinnipiac*

New Haven, Conn. – An old, unused water line on the Quinnipiac River in Meriden has been removed, the third barrier to come down in three years. The project, along with two 2016 dam removals and launch of the Quinnipiac River trail in 2018, is part of a multi-year effort to restore a free-flowing river and improve recreational access. Migratory fish like American shad and river herring can now swim into the upper reaches of the Quinnipiac River for the first time in a century-and-a-half, and safety and access are improved for paddlers.

Connecticut Fund for the Environment/Save the Sound (CFE/Save the Sound), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), and the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) partnered with the City of Meriden and the Town of Cheshire to remove the inactive, exposed water line on the Upper Quinnipiac River. It was the third and final obstruction on a 16-mile stretch of the river. Clark Brothers Dam, adjacent to Apple Valley Bowl off of Route 10 in Southington, and Carpenters Dam, directly downstream of the inactive water line in Meriden, were both removed in 2016 by the same partners. Two dams downstream have fishways that allow migratory fish to travel from Long Island Sound into the Quinnipiac.

The exposed pipe off Sindall Road was removed in sections starting April 4, and is being replaced with gravel and small boulders over the course of about a month. This further improves the fish passage achieved with the removal of the two dams. Kayakers and canoeists, who have had to portage around the pipe for safe passage, will now have an easier time moving through this portion of the river. The project has been completed in time for the 39<sup>th</sup> annual Downriver Classic Canoe and Kayak Race on May 19.

“The Quinnipiac is Connecticut’s fourth largest river, flowing through 18 towns from Plainville to New Haven and into Long Island Sound,” **said Gwen Macdonald, director**

**of ecological restoration at CFE/Save the Sound.** “Throughout our industrial history, this river has been repeatedly mistreated. Thanks to the hard work of people acting within the watershed, we’re now seeing substantial positive changes. Free-flowing rivers open up habitat needed to bring back an abundance of fish and wildlife to Long Island Sound and our rivers—and with the removal of three barriers and installation of two fishways, 36 of the Quinnipiac’s 38 miles are accessible for migratory and resident fish. A new generation of river stewards will now be able to experience a free-flowing Quinnipiac River, and explore the diverse riparian ecosystem and Connecticut’s industrial history from a canoe, a kayak, or their own backyard.”

New England has one of the highest concentrations of dams in the country, and Connecticut alone has over 4,000 dams. Many no longer provide any economic benefit, while requiring costly maintenance and causing environmental damage. Not only do dams prevent fish from moving upstream, they can also stop natural sediment from moving downstream to replenish estuaries and beaches, and can pose flooding risks to local communities during big storms.

Over the last few years, the Service and CFE/Save the Sound have partnered to remove additional dams in New Haven and Mystic. Nearly 1,500 dams have been removed across the country since 1912, according to the conservation organization American Rivers. A [2011 Service study](#) found that every mile of river opened can contribute more than \$500,000 annually in social and economic benefits once fish populations are at their full productivity.

“These migratory fish were once very abundant and an important resource to early residents of Connecticut,” **said Steve Gephard, a fisheries biologist with DEEP’s Fisheries Division.** “The construction of dams decimated the runs because they blocked access to critical habitat. The DEEP seeks to restore access to this habitat and repopulate the runs when possible and has targeted the Quinnipiac River. CFE/Save the Sound’s removal of this pipe is a necessary step toward our jointly-held goals.”

Funds for the three barrier removals came from natural resource damage settlements associated with the Solvents Recovery Service and Old Southington Landfill Superfund sites, both located in Southington, CT. Hazardous waste including volatile organic compounds (VOCs), polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and metals—as well as remediation activities required to clean up the sites—damaged and destroyed wetlands and injured the Quinnipiac River. The contamination reduced the quality and availability of foraging habitat for birds and fish, and rendered millions of gallons of water in the Quinnipiac River watershed undrinkable. In the 1980s, the EPA initiated a five-year legal battle, which CFE/Save the Sound joined, against the polluters. In settlements with the responsible parties, the Service received approximately \$800,000 to restore impacted natural resources. Additional funding through the Quinnipiac River Groundwater Natural Resources Damages Fund supported CFE/Save the Sound’s building of rain gardens and other green infrastructure to replenish aquifers in the watershed with clean rainwater.

In conjunction with the dam and water line removal projects, the Service is also partnering with local municipalities and non-profit organizations in the Upper Quinnipiac River watershed, including the Quinnipiac River Watershed Association, Audubon Society, Trout Unlimited, Cheshire Land Trust, Southington Land Trust, Town of Southington, Town of Cheshire, and City of Meriden to develop the Quinnipiac River Trail, an interpretive water trail on the Quinnipiac River that will begin in Southington and end at Hanover Pond in Meriden.

“Water trail enthusiasts are looking forward to the removal of the water pipe because it will improve the enjoyment of kayaking and canoeing the Upper Quinnipiac River Water Trail,” **says Pete Picone, Quinnipiac River Watershed Association board member** and author of the Quinnipiac River Trail interpretive guidebook.

In support of the water trail, the Town of Cheshire constructed a new canoe and kayak launch at Quinnipiac Park and there is a new informational kiosk to inform paddlers located at the launch site adjacent to the DOT parking lot on Route 322 in Cheshire. Additionally, the Town of Southington has installed an ADA-accessible canoe and kayak launch at the Southington Dog Park on Mill Street; signage at the site will be put up in the near future.

To find more information on the Quinnipiac River Trail, report any passage issues or blockages on the river trail, access the interpretive trail guide, and listen to a beautiful song written by local musician Bruce Burchsted in honor of the trail, visit [QRiverTrail.org](http://QRiverTrail.org).

“In addition to greatly benefiting habitat for fish and wildlife, removing this water line will improve public safety and increase recreational opportunities on the Quinnipiac River,” **said Thomas Chapman, the Service’s New England Field Office project leader.**

“We’re proud to be partnering with Save the Sound and all of the municipalities and organizations in the Upper Quinnipiac River Watershed that have been working so hard to restore a free-flowing Quinnipiac River, ultimately bringing people back to enjoy its fish, wildlife, and natural beauty.”

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***PRESS AVAILABILITY on-site with CFE/Save the Sound and USFWS staff  
Wednesday, April 24, 10:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.***

*Other times by appointment.*

*To arrange a site visit, please contact CFE/Save the Sound at (540) 292-8429 or [lmcmillan@ctenvironment.org](mailto:lmcmillan@ctenvironment.org), or USFWS at (413) 253-8558 or [meagan\\_racey@fws.gov](mailto:meagan_racey@fws.gov).*