



Save the Sound[®]
Action for our region's environment.

Request for Qualifications

Documentary Series on the Removal of Kinneytown Dam

Project Background

The Kinneytown Dam sits four miles upstream from where the Naugatuck River meets the Housatonic River. The Naugatuck is the largest tributary to the Housatonic River and the largest internal watershed in Connecticut, coming in at 311 square miles. Constructed as a diversion dam and later converted into a hydroelectric facility, the Kinneytown Dam was part of the larger industrialization of the Naugatuck Valley economy.

However, it and the many other dams on the Naugatuck River have had a severe impact on river and overall ecosystem health. The dam blocks fish passage. Water quality decreased because of sewage and industrial waste. What was once a vibrant river that supported aquatic life, including migratory fish runs, became known for its color and odor, changing daily based on which dyes and wastes were discharged upstream. The river was so toxic that it caught fire in 1943.

Due to improved regulations around industrial discharge and public investment in wastewater treatment plants, the health of the Naugatuck River has greatly improved. Five mainstem dams and three tributary dams have been removed upstream of Kinneytown since 1999—the same year a fish ladder was installed at Kinneytown with hopes of improving fish passage through that site.

The fish ladder has never operated effectively and has only gotten worse over the last two decades. Through continued video and photo documentation by environmental activist and Naugatuck resident Kevin Zak, evidence clearly demonstrated that keystone species such as American shad, alewife, blueback herring, sea lamprey, and American eel had no effective way to access the miles of quality habitat upstream that had been reopened through dam removals and other fish passage projects.

Between 2019-2022, a coalition of environmental organizations came together to apply pressure for a remedy to the lack of fish passage at Kinneytown Dam. In October of 2022, the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) issued a [report](#)

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that stated, “DEEP believes that the most effective and preferred form of fish passage is dam removal and that this is the best solution for unlocking the potential of the river to respond to diadromous fish restoration.” Two members of the coalition, the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments and Save the Sound, applied for and were awarded a \$15 million federal grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to remove Kinneytown Dam in 2023.

The Kinneytown Dam removal will improve water quality, restore habitat for essential migratory fish, and create river accessibility for nearby communities through the expansion of the Naugatuck River Greenway Trail. Removing the dam will also build community and ecological resilience by restoring natural nutrient and sediment flows throughout the watershed and reducing the risk of flooding up and downstream of the dam.

For a more complete history of the river and these restoration efforts, all interested filmmakers are encouraged to explore this [interactive Story Map](#).

Request for Qualifications

Save the Sound, supported by the Naugatuck River Revival Group (NRRG) and Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG), requests project proposals from a film production company for the development of a 45-to-60-minute documentary series, to be released in three parts at around 20 minutes each. It is anticipated that this film project will come together and be released in parts as the dam removal project itself advances and is completed over the next three years.

The documentary will explore the significance of the Naugatuck River, including its history (pre-colonial, colonial, industrial), the movement towards restoration, the role of dams and dam removal, and how grassroots advocacy built a coalition that culminated in a collaborative process to remove Kinneytown Dam. The minimum qualifications to be considered for this project are:

1. Proven experience with outdoor film production techniques and documentary-style filmmaking.
2. Experience navigating storytelling from multiple (perhaps conflicting) perspectives in order to convey the complexity of human-nature relationships and community dynamics.
3. Capacity and ability to remain focused, available, and committed to a multi-year project with ebbs and flows of activity.
4. Commitment to remain active and accessible for the entire duration of the project.
5. Proven familiarity and comfort working with various digital and analog film formats, including archives, VHS, Super 8, and more, as well as knowledge of necessary conversions and scopes.

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6. Familiarity with dam removal or other ecological restoration projects is a plus.
7. The selected filmmaker will be required to observe safety guidelines provided by Save the Sound and NVCOG for filming around dams or during active construction. Save the Sound support will include management of the subcontract, content review, on-camera interviews, public outreach, and on-site filming coordination.

Project Objective

Produce a feature length (45 to 60 minute) film in three parts that traces the dam removal project from beginning to end. The highlight of the story is Kevin Zak, a local environmental activist who has been critical of dam removal. Also focus on project partners, showcasing the perspectives of project leaders and nearby community members. Discuss the local history of the Naugatuck River and the dam. Document the process of removal.

Shooting Locations

1. Kinneytown Dam, Seymour, CT
2. Coe Pond / Canal Reservoir, Ansonia, CT and Seymour, CT
3. Neighborhoods surrounding Kinneytown Dam and Coe Pond, Ansonia, CT and Seymour, CT
4. Upstream sites of past dam removal projects in the Naugatuck River watershed
5. Sites of community meetings, project events, and/or Town Halls in Ansonia and/or Seymour, CT

Scope of Services Requested

1. In conversation with Save the Sound and NVCOG, develop a storyboard, individual narrative arcs for each part of the documentary, and a list of shots and filming locations.
2. Lead and manage pre-production, including planning filming days in the field and scheduling interviews with key community members and project team members.
3. Lead and manage all aspects of production, including the curation and capture of all necessary audio and video required.
4. In consultation with Save the Sound and NVCOG, lead and manage all aspects of post-production including editing, sound design, and visual effects, to complete the documentary film.
5. Coordinate with the NRRG and NVCOG to review and convert existing film footage from various digital and analog film formats (i.e. VHS, Super 8, etc.) for use in film.
6. Produce a 1–3-minute trailer for the film.
7. Provide all necessary production and editing equipment, and cover all necessary travel, lodging, and incidental expenses.

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8. Deliver a 45–60-minute feature documentary film in three parts, shot in 4K with at least 2K finish production. To include all production files and footage, given to Save the Sound on physical hard drive(s).
9. Provide brief written progress reports on a quarterly basis for NVCOG and Save the Sound to use in grant reports.

Submission Contents

Complete submissions will include:

1. A brief (1-2 page) statement of qualifications that demonstrates an understanding of the project and describes similar projects or relevant experience of the company. Please also include a description of any unique skill sets, perspectives, or experience;
2. Bios and resumes for key staff who will be working on the project;
3. At least two work product samples that demonstrate capabilities necessary for successful completion of this project and any unique skill or creativity of the submitting company.

Candidates that make it to the second round of interviews will be required to provide an itemized scope, cost, and schedule for production and postproduction.

Submission deadline – Friday, February 7, 2025, at 11:59pm EST

Email application materials to:

- Lindsay Skedgell, ecological communications specialist, lskedgell@savethesound.org

Submittal Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed by Save the Sound, with input from NVCOG, and the most qualified company will be selected to proceed to negotiations for project cost. If no agreement is reached, the next most qualified individual or company will be contacted, and so on until a contract is signed. The following criteria will be used to evaluate the proposals submitted:

1. Quality and relevance of work samples provided; and
2. Qualifications—including skill sets, capabilities, and experiences—of the contractor firm and key contractor personnel.

Ownership

The trailer, documentary, and additional film footage taken specifically for the film will be considered works for hire. Thus, ownership of the copyright and unlimited license to the trailer, documentary and any new film footage taken for the film shall belong to STS. At the completion of the project and upon request at any time during the project the selected film production

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company may be asked to provide STS with all digital files created in the performance of the services contracted.

Disclaimers

This RFQ does not commit Save the Sound to award a contract or to pay any costs incurred during the preparation of the proposals. Save the Sound reserves the right to reject any or all proposals, or to revoke the RFQ and re-issue at a later date for any reason. Save the Sound also reserves the right to selectively contract or self-perform specific tasks within the scope of work if such modification is an asset to the project timeline or budget.

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