

FAQ Orland Village Dam and Fishway Engineering Evaluation and Feasibility Study

What is the scope of the project and who are the partners?

In 2025, the Town of Orland applied for, and received \$310,000 in grant funding through the Penobscot Estuary Beneficial Environmental Projects Trust to fund an engineering evaluation and feasibility study (EE/FS) of the Orland Village Fishway and Dam. The Projects Trust is responsible for selecting, funding, and overseeing projects designed to provide tangible environmental and public benefits to help offset damage caused by mercury contamination from the HoltraChem operation in Orrington to the Penobscot River and surrounding ecosystems. This project on the Orland River was eligible for funding because mercury contamination from the Penobscot River has migrated into the Orland River due to the tides and because Orland's goal is to minimize contamination above the dam. While mercury contamination in the Orland River is largely concentrated below the Village Dam and estuary, overtopping of the dam during high tides and storm surge has resulted in some mercury present in the sediments above the dam.

The goal of the project is to identify 1-2 options that the Town can consider to move forward with that will mitigate risks associated with and improve resiliency of the aging and degrading Orland Village Dam while reducing environmental impacts, improving fish passage conditions, and managing the threat of mercury contamination in the face of future sea-level rise.

The Orland Fish and Dam Steering Committee is overseeing the implementation of the grant, and working with the hired contractors on this project. The project began in summer 2025, and is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2026.

How is this project being funded? Are taxpayer dollars being used for this project?

No tax dollars are being used for this project. The \$310,000 received in grant funding by the Town of Orland is fully funding this project.

What will happen to the dam as part of this project?

In June 2016, a town-wide vote was held regarding the future of the dam, and the residents of Orland voted to keep the dam in place and continue to maintain it. While this project may result in recommendations regarding restoration or replacement of the dam, dam removal is not on the table. The alewife harvesting area and equipment is outside of the scope of this project, but is being considered in that access to harvesting must be maintained as part of any recommended dam and fishway rehabilitation/restoration options.

What is the timeline for this project?

Our grant application was approved in July 2025, and the project began in earnest in August 2025 with the contracting of Inter-fluve, a river restoration engineering firm, and Downeast Salmon Federation, a non-profit organization that works to restore sea-run fish in Maine's rivers. The Committee, Inter-fluve, and Downeast Salmon Federation prepared scoping documents and a Request for Qualifications that outlined the scope of the project and were used to identify and contract with an engineering firm to conduct the EE/FS. Verdantas was the engineering firm brought on to the project earlier this year, and they are currently in the process of conducting the EE/FS. To date, Verdantas has reviewed prior reports and assessments of the dam, deployed water level sensors in the river, completed site surveys, and

conducted a dam conditions assessment. For the remainder of the project period, Verdantas will complete hydrology and hydraulic modeling, develop conceptual alternatives for dam rehabilitation/replacement and fish passage improvements, develop cost estimates and a comparison of alternatives, and prepare a feasibility report with all findings.

Are there opportunities for the public to weigh in and ask questions?

The Town of Orland Fish and Dam Steering Committee will hold two public meetings, the first being this meeting on June 17, 2026, with project partners to present more information to the public and provide an opportunity for questions to be answered. The second public meeting will be held at the end of 2026 near project completion.

The Dam Steering Committee is also meeting monthly with project partners, and these meetings are open to the public. Meeting notes and agendas are posted to the Town website. If you have specific questions or concerns you would like answered, you can email:

Pete Robshaw, Chair, Fish Committee at pkrisme69@aol.com

What are the next steps after the engineering evaluation and feasibility study are completed?

Once the project is complete and report is finished, the Board of Selectmen will ask town voters to approve the best go-forward option for the fishway and dam. The Town of Orland is committed to this project and depending upon the options presented by the report and costs, the Committee will pursue additional grant funding to move forward with implementation of report recommendations.

How does this project relate to what is happening at Toddy Pond and Alamoosock Lake?

This project is separate from the process that is currently ongoing at the Toddy Pond and Alamoosock Lake dams. More information about the status of those dams, and efforts underway by the Narramissic Watershed Coalition can be found here:

<https://townoforland.org/alamoosook-and-toddy-dam/>

Is there any money in the grant for actually fixing the fishway and dam?

No, there is not. The fish committee, interested volunteers, and the Board of Selectmen will apply for funding to finance the best option for fishway and dam chosen by the voters.