

EPISODE
CLOSED CAPTION
SCRIPT



RIVER REBORN
DAM REMOVAL AND RIVER RESTORATION

Emma - So let's say all your partners in your dam removal project say "Ok, lets pull the plug!" What happens when you do pull that plug? And how do you restore what's left?

Bird Chirping

Devyn - I wonder what it takes to restore a river?

Waskwane - Can it even really be restored?

Bob Garvey - What we have discovered is that the stream downstream of where the old dam is actually repairing itself and has done a lot so far. One the water is much colder which is great for trout.

Heather Hettinger - When you see a brook trout in a river in Michigan, you know it's good water. You know it's cool water, you know it's clean water they're not a very tolerant species. And they're our state fish, right? So, they're kind of a treasured species. And when we came in here before the dam was removed, we would see great numbers of brown trout and a few brook trout. Let's say five brown trout for everyone brook trout. And since the dam has come out we've slowly seen that change to the point where last year we were 50/50. Half of our catch was brown trout and half of our catch was brook trout. When we saw that shift, even without looking at the temperature data, we knew something significant had happened in this stretch because now you know the fish community is responding to that too.

Dave - Sure we care

Anna - but if you don't paddle or fish this river why should anyone else care what happens here?

Heather Hettinger - If we get to the point where all these systems flowing into Lake Michigan are reconnected, they're healthier, they're putting clean cold fresh water out into Lake Michigan the whole great lakes basin benefits from that.

You know I think it's a huge testament to just how dedicated to natural resources the tribe is. And they don't hold a grudge against the fact that hundreds of years ago their community was displaced from this region, in order to build the things that now we're trying to undo.

John Bailey - Maybe we never will get back to that point of the way it was, and maybe the species of trees and bushes that lived along the river that drowned when it was dammed up. But restored means that the other relatives have a chance to live better. Quality of life improves. It really isn't about us, it's about everything that surrounds us. Like fish nation, deer nation, bird nation, all the living things. And generations to come and so seeing that river being restored to a degree is enough to make me feel real good about it. And feel good about the people and organizations that did that. Like they say it take a village to raise a child, it takes more than a village to bring this earth back and to clean it up. And so, I ask other natives when I get a chance, what kind of an ancestor will you be? And that's a big question that everyone should ask themselves.

WHEN A DAM DIES CC

Jane Rohl - I think the river is going to be beyond our expectations I think she's going to glow she's going to gleam, she's going to be more beautiful than she ever was.

Emma - The next time you see a dam, we bet you'll think about all the things that humans forgot to consider when they built it 100 years ago. You might also consider what communities now face at the challenge of removing those dams today. See you next time on into the outdoors!