

EPISODE  
CLOSED CAPTION  
SCRIPT



**RIVER REBORN**  
DAM REMOVAL AND RIVER RESTORATION

Waskwane - It's cool there's still some white pines here.

Devyn - Yeah, they used to stretch as far as the eye could see.

Todd Kalish - When we were settling the country, it was absolutely critical for us to build the infrastructure and logging was a major business in Michigan, but there were repercussions.

Norb Tutlis - Huge, native, white pine trees was a predominate wood that they were after. Cut them with two-man handsaws. Transporting them and pulling them to rivers, floating them down the rivers, standing on the logs to make sure they didn't jam, and then getting them to a mill to cut.

Frank - So from the 1840's thru the 60's every tree within miles, within a hundred miles of here, was gone. Absolutely cut, rolled into the river along with the sediments that came off that barren hillside and floated in a series of explosions down thru town, so they could cut them up and send them down to Chicago and have them build it a couple times.

Brett - You can only imagine what kind of devastation that that would have on the actual channel shape, the diversity, the morphology, the hydrology, all of those key pieces to good habitat for fish.

Todd - Because of that devastation almost every species in the Boardman River was negatively impacted and one of the repercussions is the elimination of the grayling population on the Boardman River.

Arlene - All that life that was destroyed, literally destroyed and murdered in that moment. So, it didn't just impact us two-legged's it impacted that spirit world and in our Indian way of life we are connected to that world, we were put here to learn from that and to take care of it.

Tom - Where I come from it's called shingwak-sebing, shingwak, it means "white pine" and sebing is the river. So, we understand that process of the river and those are very important to us. When they came in and they clear-cut our white pines those are like our buffalo to the western tribes. They took away our livelihood and who we were, and one of our elders said that the white pine we have not mourned the loss of our white pine.

Anna - We know that the invention of electricity reshaped our lives forever, but it also reshaped the ecological lives of rivers across America including this one.

Frank - 1881 Edison invents the lightbulb, by 1889 hydro dams are going up all over the country. The only power they had in Traverse City at the time was from coal and wood. Right downtown there was one building with electricity in it at that time.

Marty Colburn - As our nation developed there was a need for the hydroelectric that was one of the methodologies of growing our electricity which grows our economy and provides services to our citizens.

Steve Largent - Back in 1894 when we constructed the first hydro dam.



Desmond Berry - The dams were new to the Boardman river. Obviously at that time it looked like a great thing. A way to generate electricity and electricity is up-and-coming.

Heather Hettinger - They saw opportunities to utilize natural resources and they did.

Frank - It was just let's use the resource however we want to use it, let's abuse the resource just like the trees that were cut and get the maximum benefit, dollar benefit, out of it.

Arlene - Then they brought their values and their perspectives of what they wanted out of life and changed it.

Norb - And use does not mean abuse or change and some of those changes that have come through the Boardman valley have been abusive. Man using his force, man, American men.

Desmond - But we don't understand what, what it did to the river that was naturally there and the species that did exist there that no longer exist there because when we impounded it we warmed the waters, we changed the composition of the landscape. You can't go forward looking in a rearview mirror, you have to understand that nobody put those dams in place thinking they were going to have negative, adverse effects on our environment. That didn't happen, the dams were an important part of our region at that time. It was important for the people at that time. We've moved beyond that, we know better now, we have better science in place, we have a better understanding of our natural environment.