



Removal of the Failing Newbold Dam in Kelly, Wyoming, to Restore Fish Passage



this 11/16/2012 photograph.

Grand Teton National Park (GTNP), the National Elk Refuge (NER) and Trout Unlimited (TU) propose to remove the Newbold diversion dam, a failing structure in the Gros Ventre River at Kelly, Wyoming. Because the dam impedes native fish passage and fearing it will fail with a heavy runoff season, TU proposes to provide funds and remove the structure in spring of 2013.

GTNP acquired the diversion structure, along with headgates and irrigation ditches, and all associated water rights in 1949. The diversion, a low-head log and rock dam in the river, is now showing signs of erosion to the point that failure is inevitable. Its current poor condition is illustrated by

The Newbold diversion dam has been identified by the NPS, TU, and the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) as an impediment to natural movements of native cutthroat trout and non-game fish, particularly bluehead sucker, a state-listed sensitive species. Both fish species have declined in distribution and abundance across their range. The dam is the only barrier to upstream migration between the Snake River approximately 8 miles downstream and numerous miles of upstream Gros Ventre River and tributary habitat which is generally in good condition. Recent radio telemetry movement studies indicate that some adult trout are able to pass the low-head dam, but others, along with smaller trout, native suckers, and small non-game fish, are unable to pass. Leaving the failing structure in place could also pose a safety hazard to people fishing near the structure due to debris flowing downstream or a sudden surge of water if the dam fails quickly.

NPS Water Resources Division (WRD) consultants and TU recommend planned dam removal. They believe removal would be preferable to dam failure for both resource and cost reasons. TU proposes to raise funds and contract removal of the structures in partnership with the GTNP and NER. After removal, some bank restoration, including re-contouring the project access area, and revegetation would occur.

The primary issues to be resolved are 1) determining and mitigating any potential effects of Newbold Dam removal on the upstream bridge, and 2) completing evaluation of the dam and associated ditches on their eligibility as historic resources and, if historic, achieving cultural resource compliance with the State Historic Preservation Office.

We would like to hear your thoughts and concerns regarding this proposed action. If the Newbold diversion dam is determined eligible to be historic, the park will develop an environmental assessment to analyze potential impacts and your comments will be considered during its preparation. Obtain more information and submit your comments online at <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/newbold>. You can also submit comments to Grand Teton National Park; Attention: Carol Cunningham; P.O. Drawer 170; Moose, WY 83012. The scoping period will run from December 5, 2012 through January 11, 2013.

You may respond anonymously or you may include your name, address, and e-mail address (if applicable) with your comment. Please be aware that your entire comment – including your person identifying information – may be made publicly available. While you can ask us to withhold this information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. Thank you for your interest in Grand Teton National Park. We appreciate your participation.